MUTUAL SERVICES

Healthy Intel

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Good sleep for good health

Sleep has become a precious commodity – we love it and need it, but rarely get enough of it. Busy schedules, kids, anxiety and technology can all get in the way of a good night sleep.

Getting enough quality sleep is a key part of good health, playing an important role in your:

- Physical health
- Psychological/mental wellbeing
- Emotional wellbeing
- Social wellbeing
- Workplace wellbeing

Whether you are an athlete, have a physical job or work in an office, sleep is often considered one of the most important components of recovery.

It is recommended for adults aged 18 to 64 to have seven (7) to nine (9) hours of sleep per night.

Here are some other health benefits of good sleep:

- Restores energy
- Boosts memory and learning
- Increases attention span
- Reduces stress
- Helps combat germs and keeps your immune system strong
- Improves mood and mental health

What happens if you don't get enough sleep?

On the other hand, having inadequate sleep which is considered anything under six (6) hours per night is associated with negative consequences which can include:

- Reduced coordination
- Increased risk of injury
- Poor concentration
- Fatigue
- Mood disturbances
- Increased stress
- Weakened immune system

In Australia, it's estimated that 40% of people get inadequate sleep. Some of the contributing factors to this include modern lifestyle pressures such as shift work, new parents and increased work demands.

Sleep loss or lack of sleep can contribute to many serious diseases. Some of these diseases can include:

- Increased risk of dementia
- Increased risk of cardiovascular disease
- Increased risk of sarcopenia (reduction in muscle mass)
- Increased risk of type 2 diabetes
- Reduces glucose tolerance

Sleep hygiene

If you are struggling to get a good night sleep, it's a good idea to review your sleep hygiene. This term refers to healthy habits, behaviours and environmental factors that can be adjusted to help have a good night's sleep.

Some sleeping problems are caused by bad sleep habits reinforced over years or even decades. Improvements in sleep may not happen immediately but if good sleep habits are maintained, sleep should get better. If you have tried and failed to improve your sleep, then it is recommended that you consider professional help.

Tips for better sleep hygiene:

Be active!
Aim to do some kind of physical activity daily

Turn off electronics, phones, tablets, TV's and computers as early as possible before going to bed. Blue light from these devices causes your brain to stay active.

Store all digital devices, especially your phone outside the bedroom. This may mean considering a seperate alarm clock

Avoid late-night snacking, in particular sugary foods, caffeine, and alcohol

Sleep in a dark room because light stimulates our brains

Keep room temperatures on the cooler side – ideally 17-19 degrees

Aim for a consistent bedtime routine

Mexican mac and cheese

Prep time: 5 min | Cooking time: 15 min | Serves: 6

Ingredients list

- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 4 tbsp Mexican taco spice
- 400g tin black beans (drained)
- 400g tin lentils (drained)
- 400g tin corn kernels (drained)
- 400g tin diced tomato
- 400ml water
- 250g macaroni pasta
- 125g shredded cheese
- ½ red onion, diced
- ½ bunch coriander, finely chopped
- 1 avocado, diced
- Pinch of salt
- ½ lemon, juiced

Method

- Combine oil, taco spice, beans, lentils, corn, tin tomato and water in a large saucepan on high heat and bring to the boil.
- Once boiling, add pasta and cook with the lid off per pack instructions. Meanwhile, in a separate bowl, combine fresh tomato, onion, coriander and avocado to make a salsa, season with salt and squeeze of lemon juice.
- 2 minutes before the pasta is cooked, add ½ the shredded cheese into the pot, stir to combine.
- Serve macaroni, topped with remaining cheese and salsa.

Tips:

If you can't eat gluten, use GF macaroni!
You can also make this dish vegan by replacing the cheese with a lactose free or plant-based option.

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