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Wise & Well

Welcome to the Wise & Well Newsletter, where we promote whole-person wellbeing each month and highlight health-related topics to help you be your best.

Sleep, Rest and Recovery

A poor night's sleep — worse than Kryptonite to Superman or pineapple to pizza. For the average American worker, a poor night's sleep can cause a cascade of consequences, rippling across the entire workday. Even the most savvy, motivated personnel are at risk of sliding into a sullen, sluggish version of themselves if they miss but one night of high-quality, restful and rejuvenating shut-eye.

Brain off doesn't even begin to describe the mental fog that sets in when sleep is off kilter. From hazy awareness making the mundane morning commute more dangerous than usual to impaired decision-making clouding critical thinking in crucial meetings, when the brain struggles to fire on all cylinders, even the simplest tasks feel like uphill battles. This can leave professionals scrambling to catch up or simply getting lost in the fray. A situation that no amount of caffeine can truly erase, and by the end of the day, when energy reserves are completely drained, there is nothing but a sense of frustration and unfulfilled potential.

If you've ever experienced this, you're not alone. In the hectic, fast-paced world we live in, sleep often takes a backseat to deadlines, responsibilities, and, ridiculously, the constant pull of our digital devices. Sometimes, the pace of modern life barely gives us time to stop and rest, making a good night's sleep feel more like a luxury than the biological necessity it truly is.

Your Reset Button Matters More Than You Think

Recent research reveals something fascinating: while we might think we can "push through" sleep deprivation, our brain actually loses its ability to accurately judge how impaired we are when we're sleep-deprived. It's like a faulty fuel gauge — you might feel fine, but your mental performance is running on empty.

"In the hectic, fast-paced world we live in, sleep often takes a backseat to deadlines, responsibilities, and, ridiculously, the constant pull of our digital devices."

The Nightly Reset

Think of sleep as your body's maintenance crew, showing up each night for three critical jobs: harder to maintain healthy eating habits and energy levels. We all need more, so prioritizing consistent, quality sleep is one of the most powerful ways to support your cardiometabolic health.

1. Clean Up

Your brain uses sleep time to clear out accumulated mental "debris" from the day. It's not just rest — it's active recovery, removing toxins and refreshing your neural networks for the next day's challenges.

2. Team Memory

While you sleep, your brain processes the day's experiences, strengthening important memories and problem-solving capabilities. That's why solutions often come to us after a good night's sleep — our brain has been working on them!

3. The Repair Squad

From immune system boosting to muscle repair, your body conducts vital maintenance during sleep. It's like having a personal vitality and wellbeing team working the night shift.

Skipping that Reset Button

When you're running low on sleep:

- Your decision-making abilities take a hit (even if you don't notice it)
- Emotional regulation becomes more challenging
- Problem-solving skills decline
- Physical reflexes slow down
- Your immune system weakens
- Long-term health risks increase

Additional Resources

Upcoming Wise & Well Webinar — Register Now!

Topic: Your Sleep Optimization Toolkit

When: Tuesday, March 11 | Noon – 1:00 p.m. ET



To register, [click here](#) or scan the QR code. For more information, view the [Employee Flyer](#).

So, when you miss that reset, the toll on your body and mind isn't just temporary. It accumulates over time, affecting everything from your ability to think clearly to long-term health. And the worst part? The more you try to push through the symptoms, the harder it becomes to recognize how much you're really struggling. That's why knowing what happens when you don't rest properly can help you take control and make lasting changes to improve both your sleep and performance.

Sleep Is My Superpower

Sleep is not a luxury. It's your body's reset button, a vital part of your daily routine that powers your brain, rejuvenates your body and strengthens your emotional resilience. By neglecting it, you're not only compromising your workday, you're putting your overall health at risk.

If you've been running on empty, it's time to hit pause and prioritize your sleep. Here are some practical ways to start making rest a non-negotiable part of your routine:

Set a Sleep Schedule

Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends. This helps regulate your body's internal clock and promotes better, more consistent rest.

Create a Sleep-Friendly Environment

Make your bedroom a sanctuary for sleep — dim lighting, a cool temperature and minimal distractions will signal to your body that it's time to wind down.

Unplug Before Bed

Limit screen time at least 30 minutes before bed. The blue light from your devices interferes with your ability to fall asleep, so try reading, journaling or meditating instead.

Move Your Body

Regular physical activity, especially earlier in the day, helps regulate sleep. Just don't exercise too close to bedtime, as it can leave you too riled up to fall asleep.

Mind Your Diet

Avoid heavy meals and caffeine late in the day. A light, balanced dinner and a warm, non-caffeinated drink like herbal tea can help signal your body to relax.

Remember: Your reset button is always there, waiting for you to use it. Don't wait until you're burned out. Give yourself the rest you deserve, and watch how it transforms your performance, mood and overall wellbeing.

So, rest up, superstar. And your super self will be there for you tomorrow.



Monthly Moves

5 Simple Exercises for Lower Back Pain

Lower back pain can significantly impact daily life, but regular gentle movement often helps manage discomfort. Here are five low-impact exercises designed to strengthen and rehabilitate your lower back muscles.

1. Plank

Get in a push-up position with your forearms on the ground, shoulder-width apart. Keep your back straight and core tight, maintaining a neutral spine position.

The goal: Hold for 30 seconds

2. Back Arch

Lie on your back, lift your hips while keeping your back straight. Focus on engaging your glutes and core muscles. Hold for 5 seconds, then slowly lower back down.

The goal: 3 sets of 10 repetitions

3. Swimming

Lie face down, extending your arms forward and legs back. This low-impact aerobic exercise increases blood flow to lower back muscles and can assist with weight management, which may reduce back pain.

The goal: 30 seconds of gentle movement

4. Bird Dog

Start on hands and knees. Extend one leg straight back while simultaneously extending the opposite arm forward. Hold for 5 seconds. For advanced practice, add the opposite arm extension.

The goal: 10 repetitions per side

5. Table and Child's Poses

Begin in table position on hands and knees with a straight back. Then, sink back into child's pose by bending your knees and hips until your glutes rest on your heels, extending your arms forward.

The goal: Hold each position for 30 seconds, alternate 5 times

The original infographic can be referenced here:

<https://blog.ohiohealth.com/exercises-lower-back-pain/>

Source: [ohiohealth.com](https://www.ohiohealth.com)



Monday Night Red Beans and Rice

In New Orleans' cherished Monday night tradition, red beans and rice evolved from a convenient laundry day meal into an essential year-round comfort food. The dish achieves its signature creamy texture through long simmering of Camellia brand red beans with the "holy trinity" of onion, bell pepper and celery, enriched by Sunday's leftover hambone and brightened with garlic. While traditionally slow-cooked, modern methods like the Instant Pot can achieve the same velvety consistency with a quick mash at the finish.

Ingredients

Vegetables

- 1 pound dried red kidney beans, preferably Camellia Brand, soaked and drained
- 5 cups water
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 pound smoked sausage, preferably Andouille, cut into 1/4-inch slices
- 2 medium-size yellow onions, chopped (about 4 cups)
- 4 celery stalks, chopped (about 1 1/2 cups)
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 1/2 tablespoons Creole seasoning preferably Tony Chachere's Original Creole

Ingredients

Seasoning

- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 bay leaves
- 1/4 teaspoon rubbed sage
- 1 tablespoon dried basil
- 1 bunch scallions, chopped (about 1/3 cup)
- 1/3 cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, plus more for garnish
- 3 tablespoons hot sauce, preferably Crystal, plus more for garnish
- Hot cooked white rice, for serving



Monday Night Red Beans and Rice

Directions

1. Place kidney beans and 5 cups water in a programmable pressure multicooker (such as Instant Pot). Cover cooker with lid, and lock in place. Turn steam release handle to SEALING position. Select PRESSURE COOK setting. Select HIGH pressure for 15 minutes (it will take about 8 to 10 minutes for cooker to come up to pressure before cooking begins). Carefully turn steam release handle to VENTING position and let steam fully escape (float valve will drop). This will take about 2 minutes. Remove lid from cooker.
2. While beans cook, heat oil in a large, heavy pot over medium. Add sausage; cook, stirring often, until evenly browned, about 10 minutes. Remove sausage from pot and drain on paper towels.
3. Add onions to pot and cook over medium, stirring often and scraping up any browned bits, until well browned, about 8 minutes. Add celery, bell pepper, Creole seasoning, black pepper, garlic, bay leaves and sage. Rub the basil between the palms of your hands and add it to the pot. Cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are very soft, about 10 minutes. Stir in sausage and remove from heat.
4. Add half of cooked beans to pot; mash with a potato masher until mixture is creamy. Stir in remaining beans and cooking liquid until it has the consistency of gravy.
5. Stir in scallions, parsley and hot sauce. Serve with rice; garnish with parsley and hot sauce.

Source: [foodandwine.com](https://www.foodandwine.com)

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March Is Sleep, Rest and Recovery Month

This month, each quality sleep tip reminds us just how crucial getting enough rest is for our overall wellbeing.

March 7

Understanding Sleep's Impact

Learn about risk factors and discuss your family history with loved ones. Your mental performance depends more on sleep than you might realize. When sleep-deprived, our brain loses the ability to judge how impaired we are — like a faulty fuel gauge. Take time this week to reflect on how your sleep patterns affect your daily performance.

March 14

Your Nightly Reset Crew

Think of sleep as your body's maintenance team. While you rest, your brain clears mental debris, processes memories and strengthens neural networks. Your body repairs muscles and boosts immunity. Make sleep a non-negotiable part of your routine this week.

March 21

Create Your Sleep Sanctuary

Transform your bedroom into a sleep-friendly environment. Dim the lights, maintain a cool temperature and minimize distractions. This week, commit to unplugging from devices 30 minutes before bedtime — your brain will thank you.

March 28

Building Better Sleep Habits

Consistency is key to quality rest. Set a regular sleep schedule, even on weekends. Watch your diet — avoid heavy meals and caffeine late in the day. Consider a relaxing cup of herbal tea as part of your wind-down routine.



Remember: Your reset button is always there, waiting for you to use it. Share these sleep tips with colleagues and loved ones who might be running on empty. Together, we can create a more well-rested community.

Send our Wise & Well Tips of the Week to your employees for quick, easily digestible health and wellbeing tidbits they can incorporate into their daily lives.

– Your Wise & Well Team

Source: [apa.org](https://www.apa.org)

Reset yourself every night for a stronger tomorrow. Below are some practical ways to start making rest a non-negotiable part of your routine:

Why Sleep Matters

20-30% Your performance drops 20%-30% with poor sleep.



Sleep acts as your nightly maintenance crew and strengthens your neural networks.

Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.



Sleep in a cool, dark room.



Avoid screens 30 minutes before bed.



Avoid consuming caffeine past 5:00 p.m.



Quick Sleep Fixes

