



# THRIVE, not survive!

## Your Ideal 'Health Insurance': Living Quality Years without Intervention

### How to Get More (and Better) Sleep

By Dr. Michael Roizen and Dr. Oz

**Q: How do I choose between sleep and exercise when I'm short on time? I usually go for the sleep, but maybe extra exercise would do me more good.**

A: Your health isn't a game of *Let's Make a Deal*, but there is an ideal minimum: at least 6.5 hours of sleep a night and 30 to 50 minutes of exercise a day. That may mean you have to end your relationship with late-night TV to hit the pillow a little earlier, but it's the only combo that will protect your health.

The optimal amount of sleep for men is 7 to 8 hours a night; for women, 6.5 to 7.5 hours. And those need to be solid hours: It takes 1.5 hours for sleep to become truly restorative. Plus, not getting enough sleep causes you to eat more and your arteries to age faster, which increases your risk of having a heart attack—not to mention of yawning in your boss's face.

Those 30 to 50 minutes of exercise aren't complicated. Every day, simply walk (or do any other aerobic exercise) for 30 minutes, no excuses. However, on crazy-busy days, you can break up the time into can-do segments. For instance, do three 10-minute sessions throughout the day. In addition, add 20 minutes of strength training three times a week. That's it.

**Q: Do women have more trouble sleeping than men?**

A: Yes and no. Part of the answer may depend on whether they're sleeping together or not. One recent study found that men tend to sleep better when they're next to a woman, while women tend to sleep worse when they share a bed with a man. Why? It isn't totally clear—though one observer suspects it may simply be that more men snore—loudly (which may explain why roughly 25 percent of couples sleep separately).



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That said, in theory women ought to sleep better than men because estrogen benefits the brain's sleep center. This female sex hormone seems to help women stay asleep longer and wake up less often during the night. But in reality, many women miss out on great sleep. In fact, despite their hormonal edge, women are twice as likely to have insomnia as men are.

Modern life could be a factor. Stress and financial problems from high divorce rates and frequent job upheavals seem to disrupt women's sleep more than men's. Plus, estrogen plays a dual role. While it starts as a sleep ally, over time it becomes a sleep thief. Estrogen levels start falling in midlife and continue dropping until menopause is complete. The resulting hot flashes—also known as night sweats—can disturb a woman's sleep for years.

**Q: Sometimes I wake up with dark circles under my eyes, but not always. Sometimes they're puffy too, but not always. And sometimes they're fine. Why is that?**

A: If you don't usually have dark circles under your eyes, when you do, it may be because you've had an allergic reaction to something. When that happens, congestion settles in, swelling the veins around your eyes and nose. The veins become more visible through the thin skin under your eyes, making the area appear dark.

The puffiness could be related to the congestion, to not getting enough shut-eye or to retaining fluids—which can happen if you are menstrual or take in more salt than usual or you are dealing with a variety of health problems.

The short-term solution is to prop up your head for a few minutes and put something cold on your closed eyes (slices of cucumber from the fridge; a chilled, gel-filled eye mask; a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a dishtowel). Long-term, check with your doctor to figure out if you have an allergy, what is triggering it and whether a 1-micron pillow covering or an allergy medication will help. To avoid puffiness, try putting wood blocks or bricks under the head of your bed. It will help counter the gravity that encourages fluid to collect around your eyes while you're sleeping.

