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Health Benefits of NAPPING

1. Improves Cognitive Function

We know that a certain proportion of our learning capabilities are dependent on sleep, but naps might be able to help with learning and remembering information just as well as sleep can. Brief (60- to 90-minute) naps containing both slow-wave sleep (SWS) and rapid eye movement (REM) sleep have been found to be very useful for mental performance for up to 24 hours.



2. May Be Beneficial for Heart Health

Missing sleep can take years off your life, but good news: Napping can help. A recent study conducted by the University of Athens Medical School and the Harvard School of Public Health found that people who took naps regularly on average had lower coronary mortality than those who didn't. The researchers defined "regular" naps as the kind that took place at least three times a week for about 30 minutes at a time.



3. Helps Reduce Stress and Anxiety

Some research shows that napping can help reduce the stress-related impacts of getting bad or cut-off sleep. For instance, a 2012 study that appeared in *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* found that one of the three stress hormones measured, called noradrenaline, was increased the day after the men were sleep-deprived, but not if they were allowed to take naps.



4. Fights Food Cravings

Being tired is notorious for leading to increased hunger and food cravings. When the afternoon hits, many people crave chocolate, sweets, soda or coffee to keep them going and resolve issues associated with unstable blood sugar. But if you've got just 10-15 minutes, try a brief nap instead. This can ultimately help restore your concentration and willpower while lowering stress hormones that can contribute to cravings.



5. Can Help Improve Physical Performance

Too tired to hit the gym after work? A brief power nap can help. Studies have found a correlation between short naps and improved athletic abilities, including faster sprint times and better motor reaction.



Tips for Taking a Beneficial Power Nap



Get Comfortable

Focus on getting into the most restorative position you can rather than being efficient; this gives you most time in a high-quality unconscious state.



Set the Temperature Low but Use a Blanket

It's easier to fall asleep in a cool area. When you sleep, your metabolism naturally tends to slow and your body gets cooler. You might get chilly and keeping a blanket handy could help you naturally fall asleep faster and nap more restfully.



Take an Afternoon 'Siesta'

The Spanish and Italians seem to have been on to something when they first started implemented daily siestas in the early afternoon following a big lunch! Many people find it beneficial to eat their biggest meal of the day in the early afternoon, followed by a period of relaxation and a brief nap.



Set a Timer

The power nap "sweet spot" seems to be anywhere from just five minutes up to about 45 minutes, depending on your needs. But it's usually not a good idea to go longer than this because it can interfere with your ability to fall asleep that night.

