

a healthy conversation

7 Tips to sleep better and save money

When it comes to our health, the phrase "You snooze, you lose" may not be as accurate as we thought

From Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield

Improving our health and preventing disease means getting enough exercise, not smoking and maintaining a healthy weight. Another simple strategy is to get a good night's sleep.

As many as 70 million Americans – almost one in four – may suffer from sleep disorders. One primary culprit is simply not getting enough sleep. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than one third of Americans get fewer than seven hours of sleep each night.

Sleep disorders cost Wellmark members \$45 million a year

The Institute of Medicine notes that Americans spend hundreds of billions of dollars each year for health care services related to lack of sleep. In fact, Wellmark and its members pay more than \$40 million dollars each year for treatment related to sleep disorders, including prescription medications, doctor visits, sleep studies, and sleep apnea machines. Simply put, getting better sleep would save

Iowans millions each year in health care costs, which would in turn help to reduce annual premium increases.

Poor sleeping habits increases health risk

While we may not commonly associate being tired with poor health, inadequate sleep and other sleep disorders can have a variety of health consequences. These include an increased risk for:

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Depression
- Heart attack
- Stroke

In addition to chronic disease, sleep disorders can affect your work performance, concentration and ability to safely operate motor vehicles and other machinery. In fact, the Institute of Medicine estimates that driver sleepiness is a factor in 20 percent of serious car crash injuries.

Seven ways to improve your sleep

The National Sleep Foundation recommends seven to nine hours of sleep each night to maintain good health. Here

are a few tips to help you get the most out of your sleep:

- Get regular exercise to help regulate your sleep cycle, but avoid exercising in the three hours before your normal bedtime
- Avoid caffeinated beverages after 2 p.m.
- Go to bed at night – and wake up in the morning – at about the same time each day
- Leave work at the office (it will still be there in the morning)
- Keep naps short during the day, so you'll be less likely to lie awake at night
- Turn off the lights (including the television); turn alarm clocks away from you so that, when you do wake up in the middle of the night, you won't know what time it is
- Turn down the thermostat – keeping the bedroom cool can help you go to bed easier

*For more information on health and health insurance, call the Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield **Personal Health Assistant 24/7** at 1-800-724-9122, or visit www.wellmark.com.*

Brought to you by: