



## Words About Wellness

### Part 1 of our Two-Part Series on Sleep: **What's In It For You?**



When we asked PM&R faculty and Rehab Services faculty and staff to complete a survey about wellness last spring, one of the things that most people could agree on was that they would like to get better sleep, and more of it. The information below, from the Harvard Get Sleep website, summarizes some of the research on negative health outcomes associated with insufficient sleep.

**Obesity.** Several studies have linked insufficient sleep and weight gain. One study found that people who slept < 6 six hours per night were much more likely to have excess body weight, while people who slept an average of 8 hours per night had the lowest relative body fat. Another study found that babies who are "short sleepers" are much more likely to develop obesity later in childhood than those who sleep the recommended amount.

**Diabetes.** People who reported sleeping fewer than five hours per night have a greatly increased risk of having or developing type 2 diabetes. Studies have also found that improved sleep can positively influence blood sugar control and reduce the effects of type 2 diabetes.

**Cardiovascular disease and hypertension.** A recent study found that even modestly reduced sleep (6-7 hours per night) was associated with a greatly increased risk of coronary artery calcification. There is also growing evidence of a connection between sleep loss caused by obstructive sleep apnea and an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases, including hypertension, stroke, coronary heart disease, and irregular heartbeat.

**Immune function.** Sleep deprivation increases the levels of many inflammatory mediators, and infections in turn affect the amount and patterns of sleep.

**Mortality.** An analysis of data from three separate studies suggests that sleeping five or fewer hours per night may increase mortality risk by as much as 15 percent.

***Learn about what you can do to improve your sleep – and take a simulated driving test of your reaction time – by visiting the web site:***

<http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/need-sleep/whats-in-it-for-you/health>

Stay tuned for Part 2 in our next newsletter:  
***What can you do to improve your sleep?***