Getting a Good Night’s Sleep

It never seems to fail that during exam time students talk frequently about pulling all-nighters. The practice of giving up sleep to meet a deadline or study for a test may seem like a good idea in the moment, but it can also take a toll, both physically and academically.

Research shows that:
* Sleep is an essential, not optional, part of your day.
* While you sleep, your brain is hard at work forming the pathways necessary for learning and creating memories and new insights.
* Without enough sleep, your ability to focus and pay attention is decreased.
* Lack of sleep can cause mood problems.
* Lack of sleep makes you more susceptible to the common cold.

Getting sufficient sleep is key to performing your best. Too many nights of forced wakefulness, whether it’s spent cramming for midterms or partying with friends, will eventually eat away at your health and learning. Just as you plan to spend your time in the gym, the cafe and the library, so should you plan for a good night’s sleep.

Planning ahead to get ample rest requires paying attention to other aspects of your health as well. Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants that can make it more difficult to fall asleep. Alcohol can cause nighttime awakenings and less restful sleep. Exercising regularly can contribute to a healthier sleep pattern and is a great stress-reliever, but exercising right before bed can make falling asleep more difficult. And, while taking an occasional nap can be refreshing and give you an added boost, sleeping too much or too often during the day can make it difficult to sleep at night.

Planning ahead to ensure you can get enough rest also means avoiding procrastination and not waiting until the last minute to study for your finals and complete end-of-the-semester papers and projects. Staying on top of your studies is one of the best things you can do to help you resist the urge to pull that all-nighter, make sure you get enough sleep and allow you to do your best.

(Adapted from the American College Health Association)