

How Do You Know If You Have Sleep Deprivation?

Sleep deprivation leads to the situation of sleep debt. It is the difference between the duration of the sleep one ideally needs versus the period of sleep one is getting. Ideal sleep duration varies amongst adults and may range from 7-9 hours. The best way to judge the sleep deficit is not by the number of hours an individual slept but by how an individual feels and behaves during the daytime. Long-term sleep debt impairs psychological and physical functions:

Short-term sleep debt (a few days)

- Daytime drowsiness/sleepiness
- Impaired memory
- Irritability, anger, hostility
- Reduced reaction time—errors driving an automobile, operating machinery leading to accidents
- Inability to concentrate

Long-term sleep debt

- Insomnia—an inability to sleep even when there is ample opportunity for sleep
- Weak immunity with frequent colds and infections
- Increased risk of asthma attacks, heart attacks, and stroke
- Getting into life-threatening accidents
- Insulin resistance diseases such as obesity, metabolic syndrome (prediabetes), and type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart irregularity, and heart disease

Epidemiological studies suggest that sleep duration of fewer than six hours leads to increased risk of death from heart disease and stroke.