



Should 8 Hours Still be the Golden Rule for Sleep?

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Many of us have heard over the years that it's in our best interest to get 8 hours of sleep each night. Ever wonder how accurate this is and if it really pertains to you? Also, is it simply the number of hours we sleep that matters or are there other aspects to consider? Let's explore diverse factors related to this topic to discover if in fact *8 hours of sleep being golden* really holds true.

Do We All Need the Same Amount of Sleep?

The very first thing to keep in mind is that the amount of sleep we require varies by age. According to the [National Sleep Foundation](#), the hours of sleep we need actually fluctuates over the course of a lifetime from a high of 17 hours as newborns to a low of 7 as adults. Have a glance below for the National Sleep Foundation's recommended range of sleep hours per age group.

	Suggested Hours of Sleep	
Person's Age	Low	High
Age in Months		
Newborns 0-3	14	17
Infants 4-11	12	15
Age in Years		
Toddlers 1 - 2	11	14
Preschoolers 3 - 5	10	13
School Age Children 6 - 13	9	11
Teenagers 14 - 17	8	10
Adults 18 - 64	7	9
Older Adults 65+	7	8

Notable on this chart is that 8 hours turns out to be the *average* number of sleep hours suggested for adults only. For all other age groups, the average number of hours of sleep recommended exceeds 8, (except for older adults who require slightly less). With regard to adults, some will experience 8 hours as golden, while others may do fine with 7 hours of sleep. For still other adults, they're simply not going to feel truly well-rested or energized unless they get 9 hours of shut eye. In short, it's essential for each of us to hone-in on how we're feeling and to assess the amount of sleep we need in order to thrive and be our best.

Understanding Your Sleep Needs

Chances are you're sleep deprived if you can only get started and through the day with multiple cups of coffee, habitually sleep in on weekends, frequently feel irritated, or find yourself dropping the ball at work. If this sounds familiar, there's no time like the present to slowly but surely increase your hours asleep. If you discover you thrive on 8.5 hours of sleep, try your best not to compare yourself to others who need less. The key again is to become more aware of your authentic sleep needs and embrace rather than fight or disregard them.

The Impact of Sleep Deprivation

For people who insist they can get by with less than 7 hours of sleep, that may be the case, but it's not likely. In *Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams*, Matthew Walker, Ph.D. states you don't know how sleep-deprived you are when you're sleep-deprived. With chronic sleep restriction over months or years, an individual will actually acclimate to their impaired performance, lower alertness, and reduced energy levels.¹

Moreover, Dr. Walker indicates that sleep loss inflicts devastating effects on the brain and body and is linked to Alzheimer's disease, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, suicide, chronic pain, stroke, cancer, diabetes, heart attacks, infertility, weight gain, obesity, and immune deficiency. In short, no facet of the human body is spared the crippling, noxious harm of sleep loss.²

Sleep Quantity vs. Sleep Quality

Let's say you determine that 8 hours of sleep are actually golden for you. You go to bed each night by 10pm and get up at 6am and generally feel amazing. What happens though if you shift your bedtime to 1am and wake up at 9am? You'd still be getting 8 hours of sleep, but would you continue to feel as terrific and refreshed as before? Not according to neurologist Kulreet Chaudhary, MD.

[Dr. Chaudhary](#) notes that the deepest and most regenerative sleep occurs between 10pm-2am. This is quite relevant since the more deep sleep we get, the more muscle repair and body restoration take place. Moreover, Chaudhary states that if your body is chronically deprived of regenerative sleep, then you may still feel fatigued when you wake up. In short, she claims timing your sleep is like timing an investment in the stock market-it doesn't matter how much you invest, it matters *when* you invest.

The New Golden Sleep Rule

In conclusion, rather than 8 hours continuing to be hailed as the golden rule for sleep, it seems best to consider it as more of a guideline. In its place, I propose a new golden sleep rule accounting for age, hours of sleep needed by individual, as well as a 10:00-10:30pm bedtime as a far more comprehensive, personalized and likely way to achieve greater sleep success and well-being.

¹ Walker, M. PhD, *Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams*, (New York: Scribner, 2017): 137.

² Walker, M. PhD, *Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams*, (New York: Scribner, 2017): 133.