

What's Keeping African-Americans Up At Night?

(NAPSM)—A recent study revealed some eye-opening facts about the way African-Americans sleep.

It found that, on average, African-Americans sleep fewer hours a night than Caucasian-Americans do. African-American women average 5.9 hours of sleep a night (compared to 6.7 hours for Caucasian-American women) and African-American men average just 5.1 hours per night (compared to 6.1 hours for Caucasian-American men).

Unfortunately, this lack of sleep could be taking a toll. Doctors have linked sleep to a variety of health benefits, ranging from healthier skin to better circulation.

So what's the best way to find dreamland? Try these tips:

- **Monitor caffeine consumption.** Caffeine can stay in your body for up to about 14 hours. So if you drink a cup of coffee at noon and are still awake at midnight, that might be the reason. If you have already had too much caffeine, try eating some carbohydrates such as bread or crackers to help reduce the effects.

- **Relax before bedtime.** Stress not only makes you miserable, it wreaks havoc on your sleep. Develop some kind of pre-sleep ritual to break the connection between all the day's stress and bedtime. These rituals can be as short as 10 minutes or as long as an hour.



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- **Avoid long naps.** Napping can only make matters worse if you have problems sleeping at night. If you do nap, keep it short. A brief 15-20-minute snooze about eight hours after you get up in the morning can actually be rejuvenating.

- **Think about when you exercise.** If you are the type of person who gets energized or becomes more alert after exercise, it may be best not to exercise in the evening. Still, be sure to get your exercise in each day. A recent study found that even morning exercise can help relieve insomnia.

More information on the benefits of sleep can be found in "Good Night: The Sleep Doctor's 4-Week Program to Better Sleep and Better Health" (Dutton, \$24.95).