Students struggle to find balance between sleep and getting everything done. Many substitute energy drinks, coffee and soda for sleep, despite negative health effects.

The necessity of sleep

Dr. Robert Randazzo, a sleep specialist for the St. Louis Hospital Sleep and Research Center in St. Louis, said being sleep-deprived means an individual is getting at least two hours less than the amount of sleep needed. Randazzo said college students should try to obtain nine hours of sleep a night, so getting anything fewer than seven would cause sleep deprivation.

"Energy drinks are a Band-Aid," he said. "They can give you a short burst of energy, but they won't do anything to fix your internal clock. The problem is that getting by on the same thing as functioning 'blind,' and the problem is that getting by on the same thing is functioning blind," Randazzo said. "When people are sleep-deprived, their skills are and really absorb everything. If you are sleep deprived, you lose the ability to think clearly, you lose the ability to think critically, you lose the ability to think of your own personal or even your social experience. You are depleting yourself, so making sleep a priority is critical."

Randazzo said college students can count on improved performance times, their memory and greater recall and concentration in addition to physical symptoms such as headaches, unstable moods and irritability and excessive daytime sleepiness.

"We see on average that it's not just one thing," said Dr. Randazzo. "If you gradually have a couple hours less per night that is the problem. I've told students to take a nap for a while. It's a good place to take a nap. Even if you've done something that is hard work." Getting that caffeine buzz

Junior Chris Venable is another caffeine consumer. Drinking coffee each morning and soda throughout the day, Venable said he doesn't drink coffee for energy, but rather for the taste. He said the taste of coffee and energy drinks is another reason to drink them so frequently.

"I’ve had some of the other energy drinks like 5-hour energy. Venable said. ‘I drank it and it tastes gross. I think it’s just not good for you. I’m able to enjoy waking up in the morning. I like the taste of coffee better. And even if I wake up and don’t need the energy for it, I would drink coffee or soda becasue I like the taste."

Psychology professor Fred Shaffer teaches psychology classes during the summer, in which students learn the affects of drugs and substances on the body and mind. Shaffer, a coffee drinker said a single cup of coffee that has the potential to increase alertness is a major effect in weight loss and is the number one thing that咖啡 is a pleasurable drug. Shaffer said. "It’s a drug that does it, lowers stress. It’s a drug that can make someone feel good and gives one a positive mood. When you can stop, however, you see side-effects like impaired muscle coordination and it can disrupt the REM sleep. The sleep is an important thing to affect the body, so it’s important to get enough sleep."

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The health risks

Brian Snyder, head and exercise science professor said that while some students and faculty depend on caffeine for a convenient way to wake up, the effects of the sugar in the caffeinated beverages can produce negative nutritional effects. The sugar in the drink decreases energy balance is a major effect in weight loss, he said. "Caffeine is a pleasurable drug. Shaffer said. "It’s a drug that does it, lowers stress. It’s a drug that can make someone feel good and gives one a positive mood. When you can stop, however, you see side-effects like impaired muscle coordination and it can disrupt the REM sleep. The sleep is an important thing to affect the body, so it’s important to get enough sleep."

An important part of sleep is the Rapid Eye Movement stage and part of the function of the REM stage is to help enhance processing and consolidate memories, said Dr. Snyder. This stage, which begins three hours after sleep onset, is what makes it more difficult to awaken from sleep and may affect their sleep schedule. On the other hand, Randazzo and research suggests that when people learn information, it does not improve in the short term, but if napping becomes a daily habit, changes may be made to the individual’s sleep schedule.

"As an说明性者 and incoming college student, I’ll be the first to say that if you were to get a normal night of sleep and have a normal amount of REM throughout the night," Randazzo said. "It seems that the best thing to do is study throughout the day and get a normal night of sleep and you’ll find much more information in your head."

For the most part, there are no long term consequences of sleep deprivation and our brains can recover from sleep loss quickly, said the sleep expert. One to two weeks of good quality sleep can help a person function more normally. Most people don’t have the luxury of sleeping in on the weekend as they are dealing with being sleep-deprived because academic and vocational commitments are restricting their opportunities so easy to fix, she said.

"The lack of sleep is not just a problem for college students, but for everyone," said Shaffer. "If people can get a normal amount of REM throughout the night, they will do less for you than if you were to go to bed at a normal hour and get a normal night of sleep and have a normal amount of REM throughout the night, Randazzo said. "It seems that the best thing to do is study throughout the day and get a normal night of sleep and you’ll find much more information in your head."

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By John o’Brien

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