

The Natural Environment and Our Sleep

Source: National Sleep Foundation

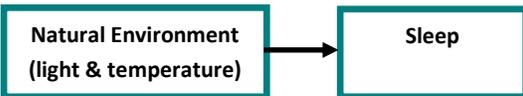
With summer sadly coming to a close, we see the days getting shorter and the temperature starting to cool. For some climates, this translates into less time spent outdoors. What do these environmental changes have to do with our sleep? And how can we best adapt?

The importance of the natural environment for our sleep was recently highlighted in an [article](#) in Preventative Medicine. The authors examined to what extent characteristics of the natural environment, like access to natural amenities and greenspace, were linked to getting enough sleep. Access to greenspace, oceanfront or other bodies of water, sunlight exposure, and temperature (including low humidity) was hypothesized to directly or indirectly affect sleep.

A positive relationship with our natural environment could **indirectly** affect our sleep by affecting our well-being and activity levels, which are important for healthy sleep:



Also, a positive natural environment could directly impact sleep by providing sufficient light and appropriate temperature for a healthy sleep-wake cycle:



Sleep is one of the most universal behaviors across the planet, and plays an important role in almost all facets of human functioning.

On Thursday, September 17, 2015 from 12:00 to 1:00 PM a HAP sponsored Wellness Warriors event will be hosted at the David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Bernath Auditorium on sleep.

In this presentation, the importance of sleep will be reviewed, as illustrated by the empirically documented consequences of sleep loss and disturbed sleep. Recommendations for healthy sleep behaviors will also be reviewed.

To sign up, log into your [Academica account](#) and then [click here](#).



Photo credit: <http://www.popski.com/sites/popski.com/files/import/2013/images/2012/01/Sleeping-dog1.jpg>

“One must maintain a little bit of summer, even in the middle of winter.”

– Henry David Thoreau

People with less access to natural amenities and greenspace were at a higher risk for feeling like they did not get enough sleep. This link was particularly strong for men and for adults age 65+.

The authors cautioned that the study had several limitations including measuring *access* to the natural environment, rather than actual *use* of the environment. However, the results have interesting implications for thinking about how seasonal changes may affect our sleep. We know that physical [activity](#) and outdoor [light exposure](#) is important for maintaining healthy sleep. Also, spending time outdoors is linked to better mental well-being, which is important for our sleep. As we gear up for fall, perhaps we can take heed of Mr. Thoreau’s suggestion and think about how to take a bit of summer with us so that we can maximize our natural environments.

Source: Dautovich, N. (2015). The Natural Environment and Our Sleep. Powered by National Sleep Foundation. Accessed on September 1, 2015 Available at: <https://sleep.org/articles/the-natural-environment-and-our-sleep/>



What’s Going On!

Visit TSW through your [Academica account](#) where you can find September’s Wellness Events

- > Check out this month’s Fitness classes featuring Basic Yoga, On the Ball, & TRX with MHRFC instructors
- > Sign up for a one-on-one appointment with our Wellness Warriors Nutritionist, Debbie Cavender
- > [WSU Farmers Market](#) featuring free community yoga classes sponsored by Yoga Shelter Midtown Detroit: [Flyer Here](#)

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How Common Is Back Pain?

Provided by Ulliance

Original Source: niams.nih.gov



Photo Credit: <https://encrypted-tbn2.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTpWNNAdyplabeftZMjgDKveAAq8pXegUYGn8Qwq34utBGPAYbj>

In a 3-month period, about one-fourth of U.S. adults experience at least 1 day of back pain. It is one of our society's most common medical problems.

What Are the Risk Factors for Back Pain?

Although anyone can have back pain, a number of factors increase your risk. They include:

Age: The first attack of low back pain typically occurs between the ages of 30 and 40. Back pain becomes more common with age.

Fitness level: Back pain is more common among people who are not physically fit. Weak back and abdominal muscles may not properly support the spine.

People who go out and exercise a lot after being inactive all week are more likely to suffer painful back injuries than people who make moderate physical activity a daily habit. Studies show that low-impact aerobic exercise is good for the disks that cushion the vertebrae, the individual bones that make up the spine.

Diet: A diet high in calories and fat, combined with an inactive lifestyle, can lead to obesity, which can put stress on the back.

Heredity: Some causes of back pain, such as ankylosing spondylitis, a form of arthritis that affects the spine, have a genetic component.

Race: Race can be a factor in back problems. African

American women, for example, are two to three times more likely than white women to develop spondylolisthesis, a condition in which a vertebra of the lower spine—also called the lumbar spine—slips out of place.

The presence of other diseases: Many diseases can cause or contribute to back pain. These include various forms of arthritis, such as osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, and cancers elsewhere in the body that may spread to the spine.

Occupational risk factors: Having a job that requires heavy lifting, pushing, or pulling, particularly when this involves twisting or vibrating the spine, can lead to injury and back pain. An inactive job or a desk job may also lead to or contribute to pain, especially if you have poor posture or sit all day in an uncomfortable chair.

Cigarette smoking: Although smoking may not directly cause back pain, it increases your risk of developing low back pain and low back pain with sciatica. (Sciatica is back pain that radiates to the hip and/or leg due to pressure on a nerve.) Furthermore, smoking can slow healing, prolonging pain for people who have had back injuries, back surgery, or broken bones.

One of the best things you can do to prevent back pain is to exercise regularly and keep your back muscles strong. Exercises that increase balance and strength can decrease your risk of falling and injuring your back or breaking bones. Exercises such as tai chi and yoga—or any weight-bearing exercise that challenges your balance—are good ones to try.

Eating a healthy diet also is important. For one thing, eating to maintain a healthy weight—or to lose weight, if you are overweight—helps you avoid putting unnecessary and injury-causing stress and strain on your back. To keep your spine strong, as with all bones, you need to get enough calcium and vitamin D every day. These nutrients help prevent osteoporosis, which is responsible for a lot of the bone fractures that lead to back pain. Calcium is found in dairy products; green, leafy vegetables; and fortified products, like orange juice. Your skin makes vitamin D when you are in the sun. If you are not outside much, you can obtain vitamin D from your diet: nearly all milk and some other foods are fortified with this nutrient. Most adults don't get enough calcium and vitamin D, so talk to your doctor about how much you need per day, and consider taking a nutritional supplement or a multivitamin.

Practicing good posture, supporting your back properly, and avoiding heavy lifting when you can may all help you prevent injury. If you do lift something heavy, keep your back straight. Don't bend over the item; instead, lift it by putting the stress on your legs and hips.

Reasons to Eat More Walnuts

Provided by: Debbie Cavender RDN,
Your Wellness Warriors Nutritionists

--- Adapted from "13 Healthy Reasons to Eat More Walnuts" by Margie King, at www.greenmedinfo.com



The simple walnut offers a wide list of benefits. A new study shows that eating whole walnuts or walnut oil can slow prostate cancer growth. If you need more reasons than this, read on.

- A large study at Harvard found that people who ate a handful of nuts every day were 20 percent less likely to die from any cause in a thirty-year period.
- Walnuts decrease cardiovascular risk by decreasing LDL and total cholesterol.
- Walnuts help control weight.
- They help control insulin in diabetics.
- Eating walnuts enhance cognitive function and improve thinking ability.
- Eating walnuts has been shown to suppress breast cancer tumors, perhaps from their omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants and phytosterols.
- Walnuts are a source of highly potent, high-quality antioxidants.
- Ellagic acid, a major polyphenol found in walnuts, has remarkable bone-building activity at the cellular level.
- Eating walnuts and walnut oil can reduce the stress response and lower the resulting blood pressure.

A quarter cup of walnuts provides more than 100 percent of daily recommended value of omega-3 fats as well as providing copper, manganese, molybdenum, and biotin. Buy walnuts that are raw and organic to avoid those that are irradiated and pasteurized.

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Sponsored through
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Orange-Walnut Salad with Chicken

From EatingWell: [March/April 2011](#)

Orange segments, toasted walnuts and tangy goat cheese brighten up this simple salad. Try this salad for a take-along lunch. To keep the salad greens from getting soggy, pack the greens, salad toppings and dressing in separate containers and toss them together just before eating.

Makes: 1 serving | **Active Time:** 20 minutes
Total Time: 20 minutes

Nutrition Per serving: 466 calories; 29 g fat (6 g sat, 6 g mono); 71 mg cholesterol; 24 g carbohydrates; 0 g added sugars; 31 g protein; 8 g fiber; 294 mg sodium; 1060 mg potassium. **GET THE RECIPE HERE!**