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# Why daytime sleeping is good

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*Why daytime sleeping is good (Getty Images)*

**I** f you want to energize yourself in the middle of a workday, try nodding off for 20 minutes. Daytime sleeping is the best boost that doctors order

Dozing off at work? You might want to pin this article to your desk before you put your head down for a power nap. Compared to an awake, but sleepy-eyed employee, those forty winks, it turns out, will make you a lot more efficient.

Don't just take our word for it (your boss surely won't). To ensure top functioning through the day, many experts prescribe a short daytime snooze. "Afternoon naps are refreshing. They reduce stress, elevate one's mood, help cardiovascular functions and boost alertness and performance at work," explains Dr Preeti Devnani, Clinical Director at the

Sleep Disorders Clinic in Khar.

Studies have found that taking a siesta not only goes a long way in improving memory and blood pressure, but it also works better than your daily dose of coffee, effectively saving you from the harmful effects of caffeine. Further quoting a study conducted on preschoolers, Devnani says it was observed that, "children who nap during the day perform better in visual-spatial tasks, in comparison to those who do not."

## Only short is sweet

The benefits of the afternoon nap are not lost on those who work in high-stress sectors like aviation. Pilots, for instance, are encouraged to take naps in order to stay well rested and alert. "Pilots naturally develop an ability to sleep when needed. Midday naps are like second nature to us," says Captain Deepak Khanna, who works with a leading airline. "Personally, I love a siesta. A short one, for about an hour or so, energizes me and gets me ready for that evening or early morning flight," he says.

Before you bring out your pillow, however, Khanna reminds us of a key word - 'short'. "Keep the siesta limited to 25-30 minutes. Napping for too long will eat into your night sleep, causing a delayed onset of sleep," says Dr Prashant Chajjed, Head of Department, Pulmonology, Fortis Hospital, Vashi. Keeping it brief is also important as naps longer than 30 minutes are associated with 'sleep inertia' which causes a person to awake or rouse from sleep in a confused, disoriented state. This is also the reason why some catnaps could well leave you feeling lethargic, not energized.

An afternoon nap is best taken -you guessed it -between 1 to 4 pm in the afternoon, and a Japanese study further narrows down the best napping time to a twenty minute snooze at 2 pm. Research says that this afternoon hour helps produce the most long-lasting feelings of alertness. Though this is a luxury everyone can surely get used to, Dr Chajjed especially recommends the siesta to those who work in shifts. To keep them up and running through the day, the elderly and new mothers are also advised to cash in on some afternoon sleep.

## Don't lose sleep over it

'Daytime sleep leads to weight gain.' This common myth sees many fitness freaks vehemently fight their afternoon bouts of sleepiness. Such concerns are quickly dismissed by Dr Chajjed. "If you're tired, you need to sleep. However, make sure you know the difference between a power nap and excessive daytime sleepiness," he says. The latter is a symptom of a more

serious condition called sleep apnea and this requires immediate medical attention.

Despite its benefits, it is perhaps easy to understand the stigma that surrounds the siesta in a competitive world where deadlines and work pressure are commonplace."People believe that napping is for the sick, the elderly and children alone. They think it reflects a certain laziness, indicating a lack of ambition. All these conceptions are false. People are still not educated about the benefits of napping. When fatigue sets in, a quick nap can do wonders for your mental and physical stamina. Take a power nap at your desk for about 10-15 minutes. Set an alarm and close your eyes. It would really help boost your energy for the rest of the day," advises Dr Devnani.

### **Perchance to dream**

Scriptwriter and National Award winning filmmaker, Satyanshu Singh swears by his afternoon siesta, the benefits of which he has been enjoying for almost a decade now."Writing and being creative tires the mind out, and nothing rejuvenates me more than an afternoon nap. Sleep is very underrated in today's world, but for someone who judges their work by quality and not quantity of hours put in, a nap can drastically improve performance. So, do yourself a favor, and nap," he says.

For those who would still find it impossible to enjoy the luxuries of an afternoon nap, make do with light stretching exercises. Walk for sometime and take small breaks. When you're fortunate, you might just find a spot that allows you to catch some shut-eye and make an energetic comeback 20 minutes later.

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