

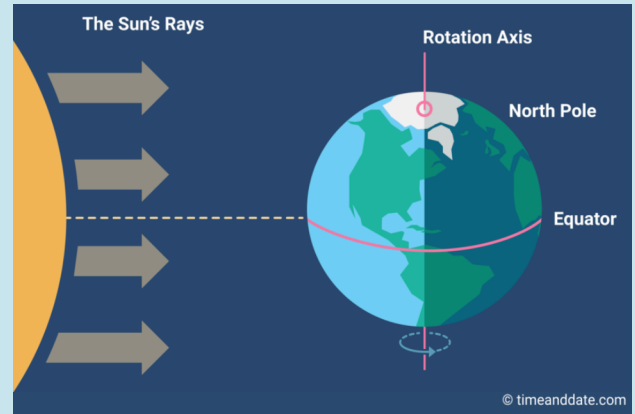
March 14, 2025 World Sleep Day

Make Sleep Health a Priority

The World Sleep Day, founded in 2008 by the World Sleep Society, is an annual event to bring attention to sleep.

It is held on the Friday before the March Equinox, which is when day and night are of equal length everywhere on Earth.

The theme of this year's World Sleep Day is "Make Sleep Health a Priority".



In support of the Day, our team at KITE-Toronto Rehab, University Health Network (Canada) engaged with eight students at the University of Toronto to learn their perspectives on sleep health and how to make it a priority.

What is sleep health?

Students' responses to *"When I think about sleep health, I think about..."* were:

Regular, uninterrupted, sufficiently long sleep

The quality of sleep one is getting based on their needs, and how that manifests when they are awake

The consequences of a good quality or poor quality sleep on the short term performance of a person and on their physical health in the long term

Sleep disorders such as insomnia, sleep apnea, stress, etc. - things that affect people's quality of sleep

The responses align with definition of sleep health as "a multidimensional pattern of sleep-wakefulness, adapted to individual, social, and environmental demands, that promotes physical and mental well-being"¹.

How can I assess my sleep health?

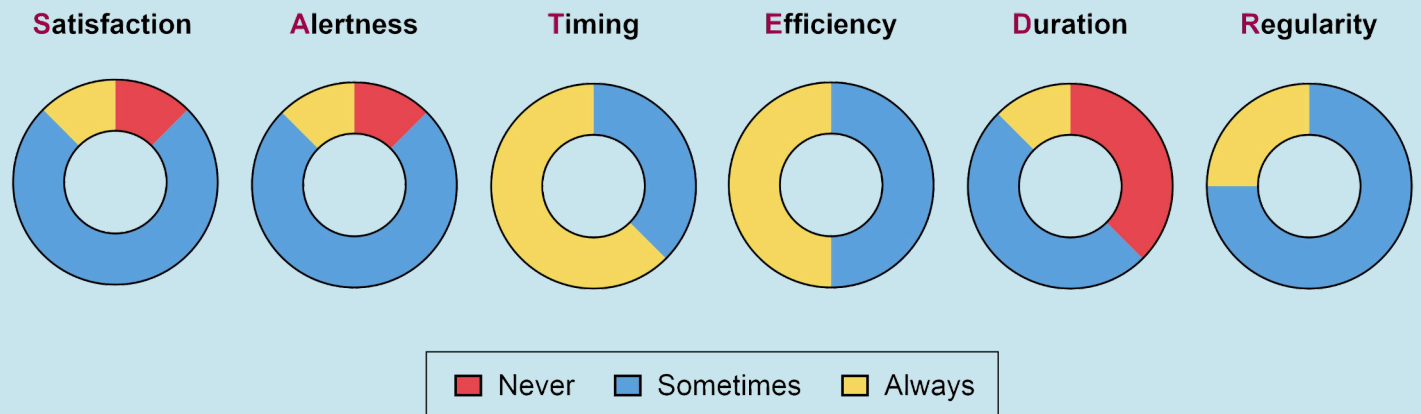
Researchers agree on key domains to assess sleep health, known as SATED¹. Recently, regularity has been recognized as important and added (RU-SATED)².

Satisfaction	Are you satisfied with your sleep?
Alertness	Do you stay awake all day without dozing?
Timing	Are you asleep (or trying to sleep) between 2am and 4am?
Efficiency	Do you spend less than 30 minutes awake at night?
Duration	Do you sleep between 7 and 9 hours per day?
Regularity	Do you have consistent sleep and wake times?

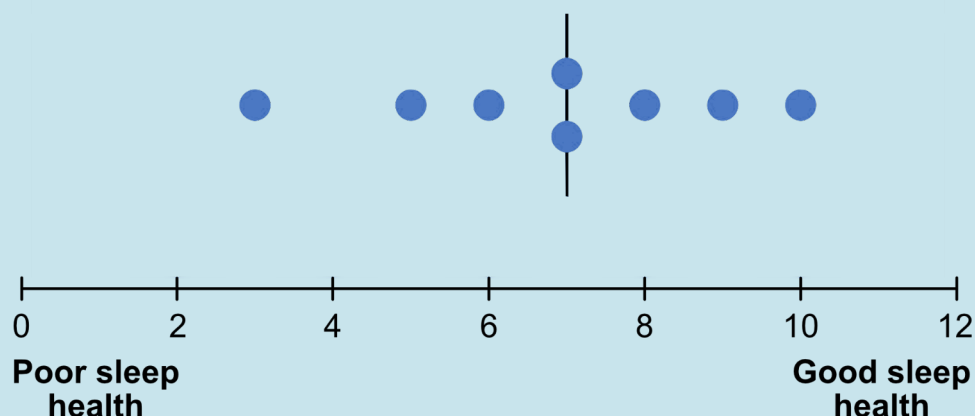
You can use this tool to assess your own sleep health. Answer each question above using this scale: 0 (never), 1 (sometimes), or 2 (always). Add each score to get a total score ranging from 0 (poor sleep health) to 12 (good sleep health).

How did students score their sleep health?

The charts below summarize student responses by sleep domain. As you can see, the most compromised domain is Duration.



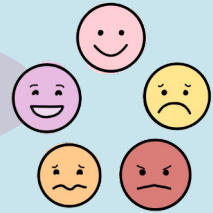
The graph below illustrates students' total score. It is alarming that for many students, sleep health is not optimal.



Why does sleep health matter?

We asked students to reflect on whether sleep is linked to how they feel or perform during the day. These are some responses:

Sleep is linked to my feelings, mood, and performance during my days

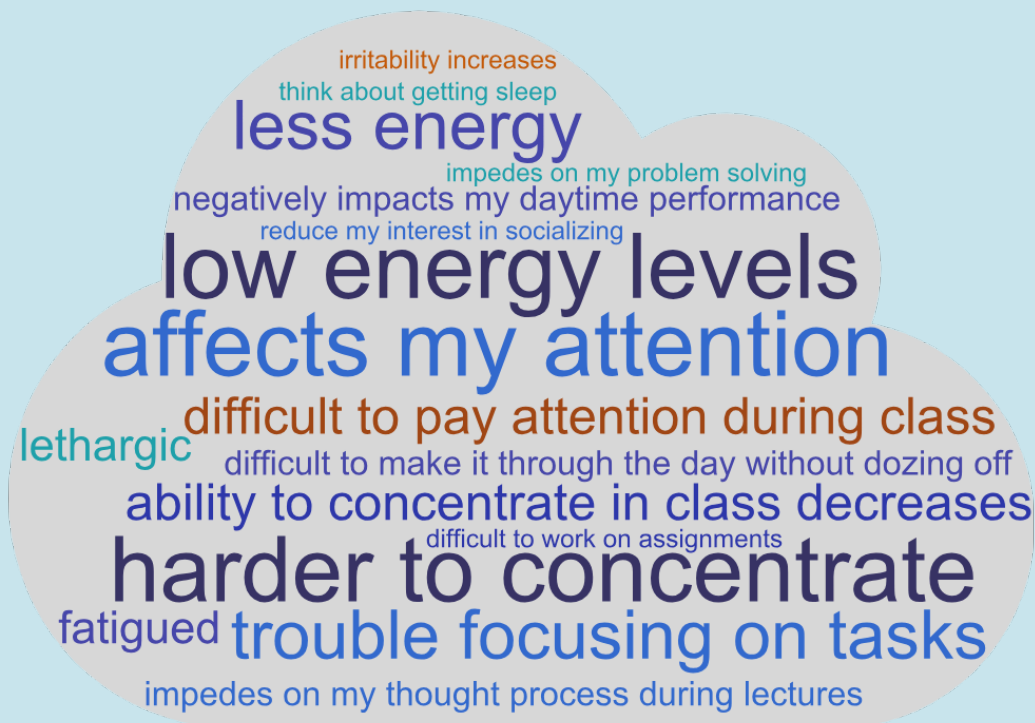


When my sleep health is better, I can get things done in a time efficient manner, so it leads to increased productivity as I am able to get more things done in a given amount of time



Sleep determines how much energy I have during classes or interacting with people

Several students emphasized the links between poor sleep health and their daytime functioning. The word cloud below illustrates their responses, where larger font indicates concerns raised by several students:



Sleep health is directly reflected in daytime functions that are key to students' success. Therefore, it is essential to talk about sleep health and make it a priority to enhance students' performance and learning experience.

Is it possible to make sleep health a priority?

We asked students if they had the capacity to prioritize their sleep health. Some students felt that prioritizing sleep health meant sacrificing the quality of their work, while others felt that they were not in a position to do so altogether.

Students shared strategies they implemented to improve sleep health and challenges they face, including overload of responsibilities, long commute times, and conflicting sleep schedules with housemates.

...Class hours in addition to the assignments we are given prevent me from balancing how well I understand the content + the quality of work I hand in... vs how much sleep I get. Resources such as lecture videos and past midterms... is a good support.



Other strategies I have adopted are limiting screen time before going to bed and doing "wind down" activities like reading, drinking tea, skincare routine, etc...

It often feels like I am always trying to catch up and that the workload is endless, but some strategies that have helped me manage this is to schedule out my tasks and try to prepare to sleep so I can get at least four or five hours every night.



In my first year of university I believed that carving into my sleep time to study would be beneficial to me. However... I realized that getting a constant 8 hours of sleep is far more beneficial for my academic performance than studying late at night.



How can professors help students prioritize sleep health?

Professors can play a key role in supporting students to achieve better sleep health. Here are some suggestions that emerged from students' responses:

- Making lecture recordings available online;
- Sharing past midterms and/or practice questions before tests;
- Allocating tutorial time for group work;
- Spacing out deadlines during busiest times of semester.

References

1. Buysse DJ. Sleep health: can we define it? Does it matter? *Sleep*. 2014 Jan 1;37(1):9-17. doi: 10.5665/sleep.3298.
2. "Measures and Study Instruments". University of Pittsburgh. Available at: <https://www.sleep.pitt.edu/research/measures-and-study-instruments>. Accessed 03 March 2025.

Photo Credits

Equinox illustration, page 1: "The March Equinox". Time and Date. Available at: www.timeanddate.com/calendar/march-equinox.html

Creation Team

This material was developed at the KITE-Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, University Health Network, by Tatyana Mollayeva and Thaisa Tylinski Sant'Ana with contributions from Daniel Phan, Sarasa Najima, Sebastian Lee, Urooba Shaikh, and Victoria Mu. Additional students from the University of Toronto contributed by completing the survey, but chose to remain anonymous.

This resource should be used for educational purposes only. It is meant as a source of information for the general public.



Sleep Health Organizations

Organization	Link
Canadian Sleep Society	www.css-scs.ca/
American Academy of Sleep Medicine	www.aasm.org/
National Sleep Foundation	www.thensf.org/
World Sleep Society	www.worldsleepsociety.org/

Additional Resources

Sleep Well Program. University of Toronto.
Available at: www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/program/sleep-well/

Sleep News. University of Toronto.
Available at: www.utoronto.ca/news/tags/sleep

Up All Night. UofTMed Magazine, Summer 2023.
Available at: www.uoftmedmagazine.utoronto.ca/2023-summer