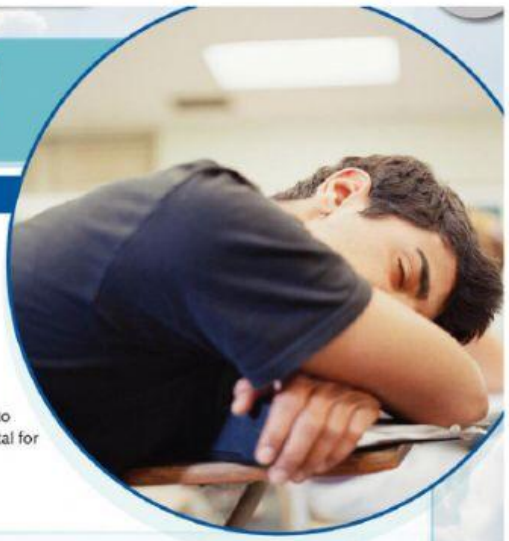
READING COMPREHENSION

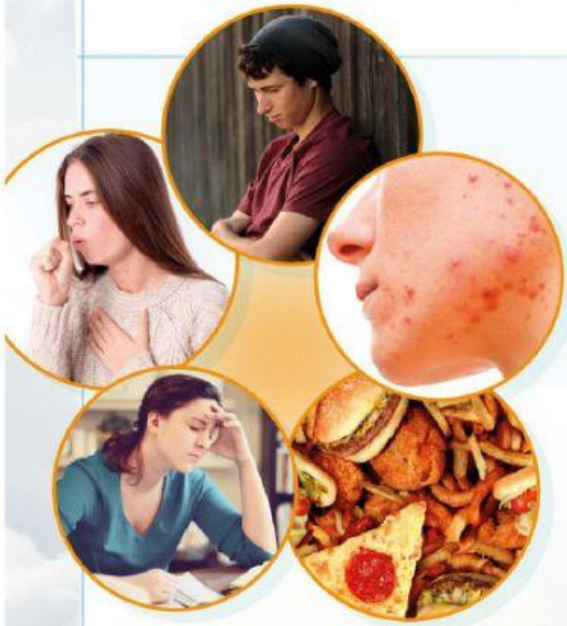
Sleep well!



Imagine never sleeping

How long do you sleep every night? Think of all the things you could do instead of wasting every night sleeping! Thái Ngoc, a Vietnamese farmer, says he hasn't slept since 1973. He works on the farm while his family sleep at night. However, doctors say Ngoc hasn't really been awake for over 40 years. No one can stay awake for that long. The world record-holder for staying awake is Tony Right from the U.K. He stayed awake for 264 hours – that's eleven days! He found it very hard.

The idea of never sleeping might sound great, but we have to sleep to stay healthy. Getting a good night's sleep isn't a waste of time – it's vital for our health.



What happens if you don't get enough sleep?

Most people need more than seven hours' sleep a night, and teenagers might need more than that – around nine hours. Research shows that if you sleep for four to five hours, you get more illnesses (like coughs and colds) than if you sleep for at least seven hours. This is because tiredness makes your immune system weaker. If you don't sleep enough, you can also get headaches, and your sight can get worse. Being too tired changes your hormones, too. This change in hormones can affect your skin and give you pimples, and it can also make you eat too much. Scientists found that tired people prefer fast food over healthy food, and they eat around 549 more calories per day than people who sleep well. All of this can affect your mood, and many teenagers who don't get enough sleep feel more angry and miserable than people who do.

How to sleep better

Do you sleep at least seven hours per night? Start a sleep diary and check. If you don't sleep enough, try going to sleep at the same time every week night. Avoid drinking coffee and sodas with caffeine in the evening because the caffeine keeps you awake. And don't use tablets or smartphones just before going to bed because the light from the screens stops you feeling sleepy. If you feel really tired during the day (and you're at home), try taking a nap. A short sleep of about 20 minutes can help your body. For teenagers, the best time to nap is from 2–3 p.m.

Choose the correct answers.

1 Thái Ngoc's story about never sleeping ...
   a must be true.
   b might be true.
   c can't be true.
2 A British man has stayed awake ...
   a for over a week.
   b forever.
   c for two weeks.
3 Not sleeping is bad for your ...
   a eyes. b ears. c mouth.
4 Your ... can make you angry.
   a hormones
   b pimples
   c immune system
5 When we're tired, we feel ...
   a colder. b hungrier. c weaker.
6 It's good to take a nap ...
   a at the same time every night.
   b after lunch.
   c in the evening.

Discuss the questions.

1 Do you sleep enough (7+ hours)?
2 Have you ever stayed up all night? How did you feel?
3 Can you think of any more advice about sleeping well?