



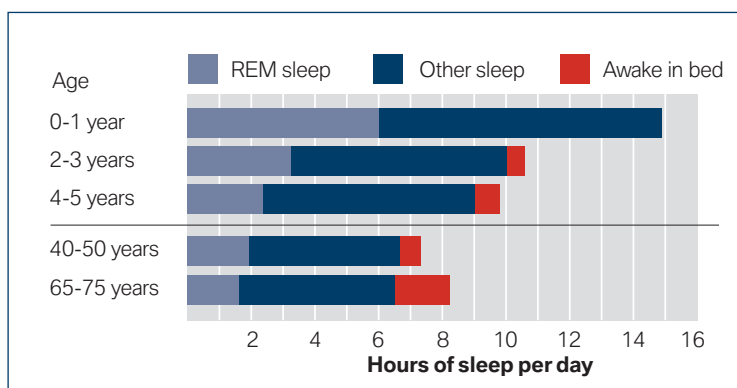
Fitness and Nutrition – Theme 9: Staying alert

Factsheet 9a

Sleep facts

- As we fall asleep, we pass through various stages of sleep. These are categorised according to the level of activity in the brain.
- The lightest sleep occurs just after we have fallen asleep. Dreaming occurs during this period which is accompanied by Rapid Eye Movement (REM). This stage of sleep is called REM sleep.
- On average, we dream 4 or 5 times during the night, each dream lasting 5-20 minutes.
- We progressively sleep deeper through the four stages. Stage 4 is the deepest sleep level.
- During a normal night, we pass through different stages of sleep several times without waking up.
- The longer we sleep, the shorter are the periods of deep sleep and the longer are the REM periods.

The diagram below shows the different stages of a normal night's sleep.



- Lack of sleep results in reduced concentration and alertness and low energy levels. Serious sleep deprivation can result in irritability, exhaustion or even hallucination.
- Excessive sleep can also cause fatigue, lack of motivation, loss of alertness and an inability to make decisions.