

# HAPPY SLEEP-FILLED HOLIDAYS: THE BEST GIFT EVER!

CANADIAN SLEEP SOCIETY, CANADIAN SLEEP AND CIRCADIAN NETWORK,  
AND IMMERSCIENCE

**Santa is at your doorstep and, like over half of Canadians who report being willing to cut back on sleep to accomplish more in the day, you are probably feeling a little sleep-deprived after spending December running around getting everything done before the holidays.**



The three pillars of health—nutrition, exercise and sleep—all take a hit during the holiday season. We eat too much, stray from our exercise routines, and do not follow our usual sleep patterns. This may be because we are enjoying ourselves too much, or because we feel more lonely and isolated and so we “compensate” by making less healthy choices.

Taking care of our sleep is not simply a matter of having a regular sleep schedule. Sleep health is the sum of our day and night behaviors and health choices. Daytime behaviors that affect sleep can be physical, such as exercising and drinking caffeinated or alcoholic beverages. They can also be related to lifestyle and emotions, such as work overload or troubling thoughts that keep you up at night.

The yearly marathon of not forgetting anything, finding the perfect gifts and preparing fun activities with the family will soon be over. So before you rush out to buy more presents, wait! Look no further! We have the perfect gift for you and your family this year. How about putting some sleep time on your list for Santa! Not convinced? See why this could be the best gift of all!

# Why sleep is the perfect gift for you and your loved ones

- **Sleep can save your life!**

One third of Canadians sleep fewer hours per night than recommended and suffer from poor sleep quality. If this is you, then it might be time to reevaluate your choices and give yourself the gift of sleep! We don't want to stress you, but just to remind you that chronic sleep deprivation is linked to several physical health conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and injuries from car accidents. It is also associated with depression, irritability and a reduced sense of well-being. What can you do about it? During the holidays, you can pay back your sleep debt by getting more sleep. It is a healthy gift with long-lasting enjoyable effects.



- **Healthy sleep can help address holiday related sadness.**

For some people, the holiday season is not a joyful time. Some of us experience stress, depressed mood or an overall decrease in emotional well-being and life satisfaction. If you recognize these in yourself, don't underestimate the power of good sleep. Sleep is important all year round, but it becomes crucial in difficult times because it helps our brain process and reduces negative emotions. Of course, we do not recommend oversleeping, just the right amount of sleep enable your brain to take care of negative feelings.

- **Sleep is an incredible personal assistant!**

Given that sleep is a powerful emotion regulator, being well rested comes in handy when you negotiate the social whirlwind and challenges related to work and family gatherings. It helps you be less irritable and more patient, and allows you to laugh off issues related to old family conflicts, annoying comments or charged interactions over the holidays.

- **Healthy sleep behavior can take away some of your stress!**

Using “healthy sleep hygiene” is one of the most important stress-management techniques that can protect you from the downward spiral of exhaustion caused by the addition of sleep deprivation to your daily stress load.

- **Sleep is not only an inner beauty boost, it’s THE beauty trick!**

How about starting the New Year with all your coworkers talking about your new glow? Beat the dark circles without spending a penny on a new cream or makeup. Start the year refreshed thanks to the beauty gift of rest!

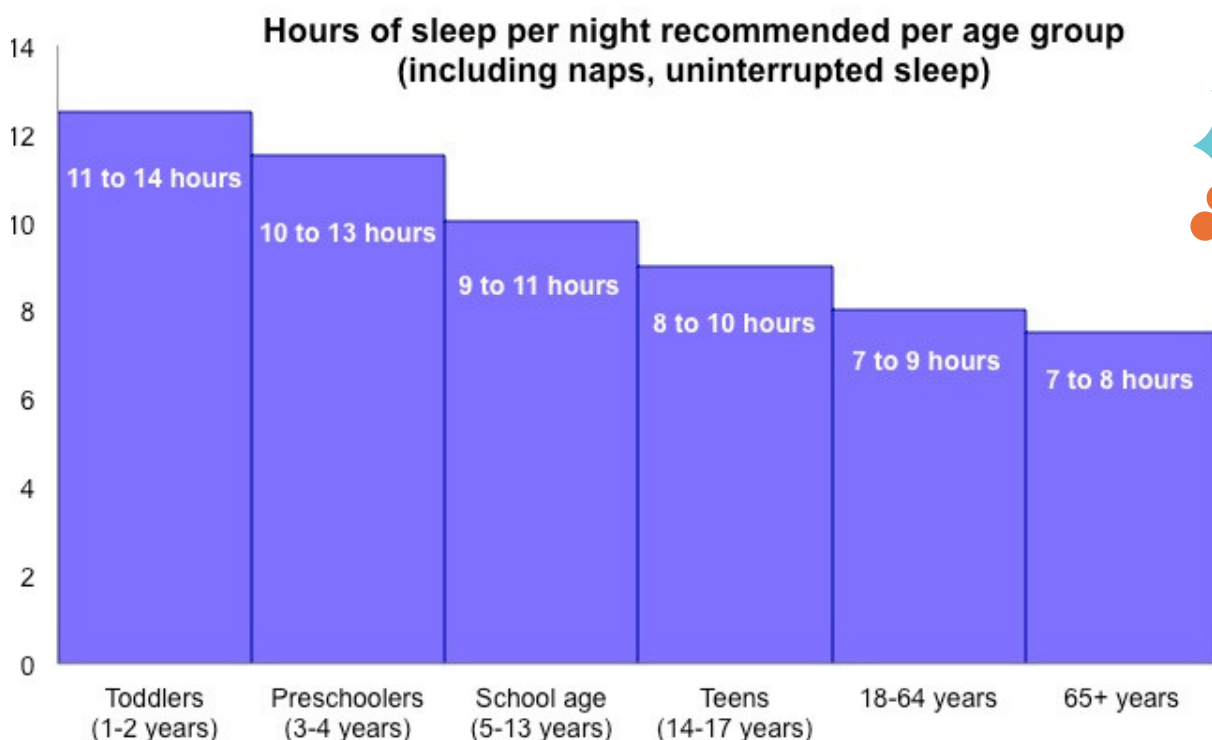
- **Giving yourself or others the gift of sleep might have unexpected positive effects!**

Healthy sleep has lifelong positive impacts on the brain and body. Instead of wishing for “health” this year, give it to yourself and your loved ones!

**Yes, I hear you thinking:**

***“Easy to say but hard to do! How can I take action?”***

The gold standard for maintaining sleep health is having good sleep hygiene. Sleep hygiene means the behaviors and choices we make that help us maintain sufficient and good quality sleep. This includes having a regular sleep schedule and getting enough quality sleep within each 24 hour period.



## Here are some simple tricks to enjoy the gift of sleep while enjoying the holidays:

- To minimize the impact of the holidays on the **regularity of your sleep** schedule, why not invite family or friends over for brunch or an afternoon cocktail party. This will reduce the number of evening events that disrupt your sleep schedule.
- Sleep quality depends of many daytime factors, with **exercise being the key to helping us fall asleep**. During festivities, plan or encourage others to go for a walk or play outside with the kids. How about a new family tradition such as going tobogganing, playing hockey or hiking? The idea is to get some exercise to help you fall asleep at night and maybe burn some of those Christmas dinner calories at the same time.
- To reduce fatigue caused by an overbooked schedule and mental overload, use the **“a day with, a day without” trick**. Pick your gatherings and organise them so that you are busy one day and free to sleep the next day. For example, have the family feast on December 25th and a pajama day for everybody on the 26th. The only mandatory activity on the free day should be to sleep well and enjoy it. On that day you should experience no stress or guilt about sleeping in, no guilt about napping once or twice, no guilt about sleeping on the couch, and so on.





- To **beat the dark circles** and start the new year on the right foot feeling rested, prepare in advance for the return to your work or school schedule.

This means that a few days before to going back to your regular daytime schedule, do the same with your bedtime routine.

Reinstate regularity in your sleep-wake cycle; the party is over!

This is even more important if the holiday schedule was out of your control and as a result you are lacking sleep.

At Christmas and during the year avoid chronic lack of sleep. Sleep deprivation is a major health risk.



You may well have your own tricks to increase your sleep time and quality. The important point is that the gift of sleep helps us to enjoy this time of year, which should be a period to rest and love.

A sleep gift may be hard to wrap (use your imagination!) but it comes from the heart and does not create any financial stress.

Don't forget, sleep is also important for your memory, providing another good reason to offer the gift of sleep because it comes with lovely memories to cherish. Happy sleep-filled holidays!

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## **About Canadian Sleep Society**

<https://scs-css.ca/>

The Canadian Sleep Society is a national organization committed to improving sleep for all Canadians through: support for research, promotion of high quality clinical care, education of professionals and the public, and advocacy for sleep and sleep disorders medicine  
Promoting Healthy sleep for healthy Canadians.

## **About Canadian Sleep and Circadian Network**

<https://www.cscnweb.ca/about-cscn>

The Canadian Sleep and Circadian Network (CSCN) is national in scope and is committed to scientific excellence in the generation of new knowledge and its translation. We look to better understand sleep disruption and its impact so we can foster healthier sleep and healthier Canada

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