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SLEEP STEALERS

Avoid These Foods for Better Sleep

For the estimated 1 in 3 Americans who struggle with insomnia, avoiding sleepless nights is a top priority. Most people know to ease into relaxing activities and avoid blue light from digital devices for at least an hour before bedtime. However, avoiding certain foods that can keep you awake is just as important. Here are four of the worst culprits.

Rhythm Wreckers

Cheese lovers, beware! Tyramine, an amino acid found in fermented and aged foods, including cheese, tends to trigger the release of norepinephrine, a neurotransmitter that can raise blood pressure. Alcohol also is believed to interfere with circadian rhythms by disrupting the body's sensitivity to natural sleep cues, such as waning light in the evening.

Acid Igniters

For the estimated 1 in 5 Americans who suffer from acid reflux, the food and drink consumed before bedtime are pivotal to sleep quality. Foods that trigger this gastrointestinal disorder include spicy items and high-fat dairy products like ice cream. Sadly, popular party fare, which includes cheese, tomato sauce, alcohol, and carbonated drinks, also can trigger heartburn.



Tummy Troublemakers

As enjoyable as carbonated beverages may be, they can cause gas, bloating, and general stomach discomfort, preventing you from settling into sleep. Other potential triggers of stomach problems include citrus fruits, which have a high acid content that can fuel stomach acid. Citrus also acts as a natural diuretic, prompting you to awaken in need of a bathroom at night.

Hidden Caffeine

Avoiding the caffeine in coffee, energy drinks, and soft drinks is a no-brainer, but certain teas can disrupt sleep, too. While even the highest-caffeine teas, including yerba mate and black tea, have less than half as much caffeine as a standard cup of coffee, all true teas — so defined because they are made from the Camellia sinensis plant — still have enough caffeine to disturb sleep. Only herbal teas like chamomile, peppermint, and hibiscus brews are caffeine-free. And chamomile, in particular, contains the added benefit of a plant-based compound called apigenin, which calms the brain.

NEW YEAR, NEW MARKETING GOALS

HOW TO CONNECT WITH PATIENTS AND FAMILIES IN 2025

3, 2, 1 ... Happy New Year! With 2025 here, now is the perfect time to take a fresh look at your marketing plan for the upcoming year. Even if you don't have a plan, it's still a good opportunity to assess how well you're engaging your patients and their families. One of the most effective ways to connect with them is through social media — after all, it has the power to make your office more accessible, relatable, and memorable. Let's take a look at some pointers to help make 2025 a year of meaningful connections with patients and their families.

Get Creative on Social Media

Social media is a great way to build a friendly, approachable brand for your practice. Posting regularly — ideally a few times a week — keeps you visible and engaged with your patients and their families. Show off what makes your office unique by sharing a mix of content:

Educational Posts: Share tips on oral health, like "5 Ways to Make Brushing Fun for Kids" or "How Much Toothpaste Should Your Child Really Use?" These posts help to position your office as a trusted source of information.

Fun Facts: Little-known dental facts or "Did You Know?" posts can engage kids and adults alike, sparking curiosity and adding a fun twist.

Behind-the-Scenes Photos: Introduce your team and show off your office's friendly atmosphere. You can post short bios of staff members or fun facts about them. Parents love seeing familiar faces, and kids can get to know the people who will be helping them.

Celebrations and Holidays: Recognize fun holidays and special days with themed posts and contests. This keeps things lighthearted and fun and helps you connect with families.

Involve the Whole Team

You don't need a full marketing department to run an effective campaign. In fact, getting your team involved can make the process easier and more engaging. Take out a whiteboard and brainstorm ideas as a team. Designate roles based on strengths and interests. For example, if one team member loves taking photos, they could be in charge of capturing and posting pictures of daily office happenings, while someone who's a great writer could help with crafting captions or educational posts.

Encourage Patient Engagement

A large part of successful social media marketing is interaction. Encourage families to engage with your posts by making them fun and interactive. Here are some ideas:

Monthly Photo Contests: Run a "Best Brushing Face" or "Healthy Snack" contest. Ask patients to submit photos and offer a small prize, like a gift card or a dental goodie bag.

Feedback Fridays: Invite parents to leave reviews or share what their child loves most about visiting the office. Featuring a few of these testimonials can build trust with potential new patients.

Polls and Quizzes: Use simple polls like "What's Your Child's Favorite Toothbrush Color?" to boost engagement. These quick questions are fun for kids and give you insights into your patients' preferences.

A fresh approach to marketing can set your pediatric dental office apart this year! Even if you don't have an official marketing plan, the small steps you take to engage patients and families — especially on social media — will work wonders! Happy New Year!

Looking for fun and different days to celebrate to help generate patient engagement in your office? Check out this list of upcoming "holidays!"

- Jan. 6: National Cuddle-Up Day
- Jan. 13: National Sticker Day
- Jan. 13: National Rubber Ducky Day
- Jan. 14: National Dress Up Your Pet Day
- Jan. 15: National Bagel Day
- Jan. 18: National Winnie the Pooh Day
- Jan. 25: National Opposite Day
- Feb. 6: National Frozen Yogurt Day
- Feb. 8: National Kite Flying Day
- Feb. 9: National Pizza Day
- Feb. 17: National Random Acts of Kindness Day
- Feb. 20: National Love Your Pet Day
- Feb. 28: National Tooth Fairy Day



Rhea
Rhea M. Haugeth, D.M.D.

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Teen Scientist Opens New Frontier in Fighting Cancer

As a small child in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Heman Bekele saw countless people laboring long hours in the hot sun every day. After moving to the U.S. at age 4, Heman’s boundless curiosity and interest in science led him to identify a pressing human problem: Legions of people at high risk of skin cancer cannot afford treatment, which costs about \$40,000 on average.

That was the starting point of a scientific odyssey that landed Heman on the national stage at age 14 — first as America’s Top Young Scientist in a 2023 competition sponsored by 3M and Discovery Education, and then as Time magazine’s 2024 Kid of the Year. Heman reached that pinnacle by doing what scientists do — breaking down big problems into smaller questions and resolving them step by step.

Heman believes science offers endless possibilities and sensed that at an early age when he began mixing random household chemicals to see what would happen. “My parents worried that I would blow the house up,” he told an interviewer.

His research led him to identify a cancer-fighting agent, imidazoquinoline, used for treating basal cell carcinoma. Recent research suggests it may also be effective against melanoma and squamous cell carcinoma. Heman searched for a mechanism for applying the chemical that was both affordable and widely used and settled on soap. In a formulation he developed, the imidazoquinoline wraps around nanolipid-



based particles in the soap, transporting the drug into the skin and holding it there while suds wash away.

None of this was easy. Heman sought help from mentors at 3M and universities near his Virginia home. But the outcome so far is impressive. His Skin Cancer Treating Soap shows promise in tests on computer models.

Amid all that research, Heman still has time for fun, he says, participating in marching band, playing chess and basketball, and reading. Eventually, he hopes to build a nonprofit organization around his idea. “I believe that young minds can make a positive impact on the world,” Heman wrote in his entry materials for the 2023 award. As he later told a television interviewer, “If you work hard enough, anything is possible.”

“Like our content? Use the provided articles in your company blog or Facebook posts!”

TEENS AND CHORES

How to Turn Reluctance Into Responsibility

No one loved doing household chores growing up, but chores are great for building character and work ethic. If we shirk our responsibilities, we inevitably turn into vegetables — couch potatoes.

No doubt, convincing your teenagers of the value of hard work and the importance of doing their chores can be trying at times. Sure, many grumble about “kids these days” and how parenting used to be, but we should remember that child-rearing has come a long way since the old days. For example, when Aztec children refused to do their chores, their parents would hold them over smoking chilies, resulting in eye-watering, skin-irritating torment — basically the Mesoamerican equivalent of pepper spraying kids in the face. The further we can get from that standard of parenting, the better. So, here are two tips to help convince your teens to chip in around the house — no peppers needed.

Frame it differently.
Sometimes, all you need is a change in perspective. Rather than simply stating that things need to get done — “Because I said so!” — it can help to pitch chores as ways your teens can help around the house. Talk about everything that needs to be done to contribute to a healthy, happy home. There’s grocery shopping, feeding the dog, doing the laundry, maintaining the ever-growing collection of succulents, you name it. This will give them more perspective into how much their parents currently

take on. Then, break down which responsibilities they’ll be assigned to complete and how often you expect them to do each task.

Good work deserves a reward.
Chore money has always been a great incentive to encourage teens to do their part around the home. These days, there are even apps, like BusyKid, that assign a monetary value to different chores around the house. This doesn’t mean you have to break the bank, but teaching your kids that hard work pays off can motivate them to accomplish more around the home.



SITUATION OF THE MONTH

Dear PDTA Pro,

With all this talk about social media and drumming up engagement, our office is starting to plan ahead for Valentine’s Day. Do you have any ideas for something fun we can do in the office or on our social platforms?

—Let’s Get Creative



Dear Let’s Get Creative,

Kids love Valentine’s Day! It’s the perfect opportunity to make them feel special and appreciated. Here are some ideas to bring a little extra cheer to your office this Valentine’s Day and all month long.

Send Personalized Valentines
A cute idea is to head to a dollar store, pick up some small, kid-friendly Valentine cards, and send them out to patients. For each card, include a little note about how great a patient they were during their last visit, adding a personal touch that shows you remember and appreciate them. This gesture can make a big impression on young patients and their families. Add a fun office stamp or label to the envelope, or go for a festive sticker on the back to make it extra special.

Valentine’s Day Themed Contests
We have a few fun ideas for you!

1. Little Smiles Photo Contest
Invite patients to submit a picture of themselves smiling. Select a winner at random or pick the most creative smile for a Valentine’s gift card or a dental goodie bag.

2. Valentine’s Art Contest
Encourage kids to draw or color a Valentine-themed picture. Display the artwork around the office or post some favorites on your social media. You could even invite your followers to vote on the winning artwork!

3. Guessing Game
Set up a jar filled with heart-shaped candies and invite patients to guess the number of candies. The closest guess wins a small prize.

With simple efforts like these, you can create a memorable experience that builds loyalty and keeps kids looking forward to their next visit! Happy Valentine’s Day!

—Pediatric Pro

HAVE A LAUGH



CITRUS-HERB PORK ROAST



INGREDIENTS Inspired by TasteOfHome.com

- 1 boneless pork sirloin roast (3–4 pounds)
- 2 tsp dried oregano
- ½ tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp pepper
- 2 medium onions, cut into thin wedges
- 1 cup plus 3 tbsp orange juice, divided
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 1 tbsp grapefruit juice
- 1 tbsp steak sauce
- 1 tbsp reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tsp grated orange zest
- 1 tsp salt
- 3 tbsp cornstarch
- Egg noodles, cooked

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut roast in half. In a small bowl, combine oregano, ginger, and pepper; rub over pork. In a large skillet coated with oil, brown roast on all sides. Transfer to a slow cooker; add onions.
2. In a small bowl, combine 1 cup orange juice, sugar, grapefruit juice, steak sauce, and soy sauce; pour over roast. Cover and cook on low for 4–5 hours or until meat is tender. Remove meat and onions to a platter.
3. Transfer cooking juices to a small saucepan. Add orange zest and salt. Bring to a boil. Combine cornstarch and remaining orange juice. Gradually stir into the pan for 2 minutes or until thickened. Serve with pork and noodles.