



RealAge Tip

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Pillow Talk from the Heart

If you're debating whether to go to bed early or tackle your holiday to-do list, go for the pillow time.

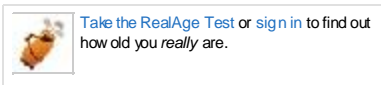
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Here's why: Shortchanging yourself on ZZZs makes your heart work harder. Here's how: When you sleep, your body goes into a lower blood pressure mode. But too little time in this low-key state can eventually lead to high blood pressure. So set the list aside and give your heart a little holiday instead.

If you've traded sleep time for to-do lists, tight deadlines, or fretful toddlers, you're like most people over 30 who are getting historically low levels of sleep.

[Hypertension](#) is on the rise in this age group, too, and researchers believe these two trends are related.

One study of people aged 32 to 59 found that those who got fewer than 5 hours of sleep a night for several years were twice as likely to develop hypertension as people who got a healthy 7 or 8 hours each night.

Cutting back on a full night's sleep again and again comes back at you in several ways:

- It deprives you of the time when your blood pressure is lower.
- It means you spend more time dealing with stress instead of resting.
- And [salt retention](#), a well-known contributor to high blood pressure, may increase with sleep deprivation.

If getting enough shut-eye this holiday season is a challenge, think about this: Whatever's tempting you to stay up late will still be there tomorrow, whether it's hanging lights, wrapping presents, making travel plans, or searching online for the perfect gift. But with rest, you'll do those tasks better -- and probably faster.

RealAge Benefit: Getting 6 to 8 hours of sleep per night can make your RealAge as much as 3 years younger.

RealAge Smart Search: [Are you getting enough sleep? Find out how to sleep better longer with these hand-selected results.](#)

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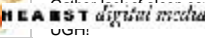
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