

Why Do We Sleep?



Warm-up questions

1. How many hours do you sleep every night?
2. Do you sleep well at night?
3. What makes it hard for you to sleep?

Vocabulary

1	essential	不可欠な、必要な	14	evolutionary perspective	進化的な視点
2	behavior	行動	15	outweighs	上回る
3	mammals	哺乳類	16	in the open	野外で
4	vulnerable	傷つきやすい、無防備な	17	developed	発達した、発展した
5	evolution	進化	18	adaptations	適応
6	eliminate	取り除く、なくす	19	evolve	進化する
7	critical	非常に重要な	20	struggle with	～に苦しむ、苦勞する
8	harmful waste	有害な老廃物	21	experts	専門家
9	strengthens memory	記憶を強化する	22	avoid	避ける
10	processes	処理する	23	environment	環境
11	repair	修復する	24	biological need	生物学的な必要性
12	cells	細胞	25	survival	生き残り
13	immune system	免疫システム	26	habits	習慣

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Sleep is one of the most mysterious and essential behaviors in the animal kingdom. Humans, birds, mammals, and even some insects sleep regularly. But this raises an important question: if sleeping makes us vulnerable—unable to escape danger or find food—why hasn't evolution eliminated it?

The answer lies in how critical sleep is for both the brain and body. While we sleep, the brain performs important tasks. It clears out harmful waste, strengthens memory, and processes the events of the day. At the same time, the body repairs damaged cells, builds muscle, and supports the immune system. Without enough sleep, people become less focused, more emotional, and more likely to get sick.

From an evolutionary perspective, sleep must provide such strong benefits that it outweighs the risks. In fact, animals that sleep in the open, like horses or giraffes, have developed ways to rest lightly or stand while sleeping. Others, like dolphins, can let one half of their brain sleep at a time. These adaptations show how important sleep is—so important that animals evolved ways to do it safely, rather than give it up.

Today, many people do not get enough sleep or struggle with poor sleep quality. Modern life, with its bright screens and busy schedules, often makes it harder to fall and stay asleep. To improve sleep quality, experts suggest keeping a regular sleep schedule, avoiding caffeine and screens before bed, and creating a quiet, dark, and comfortable sleeping environment.

In conclusion, sleep is not just a break from daily life. It is a powerful biological need that supports health, learning, and survival. Evolution has protected sleep for millions of years—and with a few simple habits, we can make sure our sleep helps us live better lives, too.

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Comprehension Questions

1. なぜ「眠ること」は進化の中でなくならなかったと考えられていますか？
2. イルカはどのように眠りを工夫していますか？
3. 良い睡眠のために勧められていることは何ですか？

Complete the sentence.

- 1 There is growing evidence that_____.
～であるという証拠が増えています。
- 2 From a health perspective, it is clear that_____.
健康の観点からすると、～であることは明らかです。
- 3 It is widely known that_____.
～であることは広く知られています。
- 4 In contrast, some people argue that_____.
対照的に、～だと主張する人もいます。
- 5 Therefore, we should consider taking action to_____.
したがって、私たちは～するための行動を考えるべきです。

A stylized illustration of a blue house with a grey roof. The house has a yellow door and two yellow square windows. A chimney on the right side of the roof is emitting a plume of white smoke. The house is set on a green base.

1. Should schools start later in the morning to help students get more sleep?

3. Should governments do more to teach people about the importance of sleep and healthy habits?