Secrets to the Perfect Power Nap

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(Stormy beginning) Ah, naps. Some swear by them, others think they’re overrated. Whichever way you stand, the health benefits of napping are real. Just like toddlers get cranky without a nap, sleep-deprived grown-ups can get irritable, too. Albeit the upsides touted by famous nap-takers (Albert Einstein, and Thomas Edison***, just to name a few)***, science says it’s just the opposite **;** catching zzz’s in the middle of the day can perk up your mood, improve your memory and productiveness, and make you feel more alert. (Rule of 3)

**That said,** the health benefits and mental boost of a good power nap aren’t limited to a specific gender or age group. Students, shift workers, desk jockeys — anyone who wants a little afternoon pick-me-up could take a nap instead of a trip to the vending machine.The true secret to a power nap lies in its duration. A solid 20 minutes is ideal. To feel refreshed, your nap should take you from stage 1 sleep (drifting off) to stage 2 sleep (when brain activity slows.Exceeding that limit brings you into deep sleep, which is what causes the groggy and tired after-nap feeling called sleep inertia. That sense of sleepiness and disorientation often lasts for about an hour after waking up from a deep sleep.

**That’s no fun,** especially when you have to get through the rest of the work day. Set an alarm to make sure you don’t oversleep. Experts say prime napping time is between one and three in the afternoon when energy levels take a tip dip due to a rise in melatonin, a hormone that maintains the body’s circadian rhythm, or sleep-wake cycle. It’s also just practical timing — soon after lunch, right in the middle of the day. Napping any later in the day will make it more difficult to fall asleep at bedtime.

Choose your napping zone carefully. Pick a quiet space where no one can disturb you. It’s called a power nap for a reason. You’re on a mission to get in and out of sleep fairly fast.

Couch or bed: Does it matter? Not necessarily. Whether you conk out on a cot tucked into a nap room at your office, a seat on a commuter train, or at home in your cozy bed, you’ll reap the same brain-boosting benefits. The difference has more to do with ease of falling asleep. You may doze off more quickly in the place you sleep at night.

Eliminate distractions. No computers or phones allowed. A cup of coffee might be a good idea, though. Sound weird to you? Some studies have proven a case for the “caffeine nap.” Here’s how it works: Caffeine doesn’t kick in immediately.

Go Forth and Nap. Try these tips and let us know how they work for you. Do you feel more refreshed after making napping a part of your routine? If you already swear by naps, tell us why!