Sleep
by Sara Quan

How much sleep do you get? How well do you sleep? A recent poll for the National Sleep Foundation (NSF) reports that 75% of America’s adults are not getting enough sleep and that they have symptoms of sleep problems. Such symptoms can include waking a lot during the night and/or snoring and are frequently ignored as potential sleep problems.

Why the concern? Poor sleep affects every part of our lives:

1. Driving hazards and safety concerns when drivers are drowsy.
2. Tardiness to work or the kids to school.
3. Missing work and activities or making errors at work.
4. Disrupting your partner’s sleep.
5. Relationships can be affected if one partner has abnormal sleep.

These were only a few that were on the list.

How many hours each night do you sleep? Sleep experts recommend 7-9 hours of sleep a night. According to the poll, America’s adults average 6.9 hours of sleep a night. And, since 1998, more people are sleeping less than 6 hours a night. It was reported that 6.5 hours a night is the minimum requirement for optimal function the next day, and only three quarters of respondents actually get this amount of sleep or more. Respondents also report feeling tired and fatigued at least one day a week. The conclusion: we are not getting enough sleep and the quality of it is poor.

How well we are rested directly affects our health. It is known that being overweight may impact sleep. The results of the poll gathered body mass index (BMI) measurements from respondents and approximately two-thirds of the respondents were overweight or obese. This group of respondents also averaged less than 6 hours of sleep a night and experienced more episodes of daytime sleepiness.

The poll also gathered information on people with medical conditions (high blood pressure, arthritis, depression, heartburn) revealing that this group experiences only a few good nights sleep and commonly experiences daytime sleepiness. These groups of respondents are more likely to experience apnea, insomnia, restless leg syndrome and are more likely to think that they have a sleep problem.

What about naps? Naps were enjoyed by approximately 50% of the poll respondents and averages around 50 minutes with a good size group napping 60 minutes or more. The recommended nap is 20-45 minutes. Are we trying to catch-up with longer naps? Active masters swimmers can always enjoy a nap - it comes down to finding the time to fit one in between work, family and (over) training!

To conclude, Americans need more sleep. By reducing our sleep we challenge our safety, health and happiness. Happy siesta!