


Outdoor health tips from the posse:

# Naps can be good for you

Naps are not always a good thing. Taking a nap in a tree stand while hunting is probably not going to end well, nor is a nap while driving your car. A nap at either of those times could be hazardous to your health, to say the least.



**Mark Rackay**  
Tips from the Posse

As a teenager, I could take a nap just about anytime I sat in a chair, especially in school. Those were usually short “cat naps” that ended abruptly with all the yelling and screaming from the teachers.

As a young man, with a wife, kids and work, there was no such thing as a nap. Someone always wanted something or there was always a thing I had to do. Kids are a real nap killer. If you sleep, they take off on a seek and destroy mission. Best to remain ever vigilant with kids around, and save the naps for later in life.

Now that I am “somewhat later in life” I still have trouble taking a nap. It’s not that I can’t sleep, because that has never been a problem. If my wife catches me napping, she immediately assumes I have nothing better to do. Out comes that endless chore list from the ultimate nap killer.

While naps have many benefits, people still sometimes associate negative stigmas with it. Some folks, like my grandmother, associate napping with laziness, a lack of ambition and generally low standards of life. Others associate naps with small children, the elderly or sick people.

A study that was published in the research journal Sleep examined the benefits of naps of varying lengths versus no naps at all. The results showed that a 10-minute nap showed the most benefit in terms of reduced fatigue and improved cognitive performance.

A nap lasting longer than 30 minutes was found to be most likely followed by sleep inertia, which is the period of grogginess that sometimes follows sleep. If you have ever taken one of those two-hour naps, and woke up feeling tired and like you never had a nap, you are a victim of sleep inertia.

The key to overall health is to get enough sleep. You cannot make up for lack of sleep by taking naps. In fact, taking long daytime



Even the king of the jungle knows the importance of a good nap. (Photo by Wikimedia commons/Magnus Manske)

naps may not be doing any favors to your heart.

Research has discovered that long naps and excessive sleepiness during the day were associated with an increased risk of metabolic syndrome, heart disease and diabetes. Metabolic syndrome includes high blood pressure, high cholesterol, high blood sugar and weight problems.

The research showed that people who napped for less than 40 minutes were not at increased risk for metabolic syndrome. Those people who napped less than 30 minutes actually were at a decreased risk. For those napping more than 90 minutes, there was an increased risk of metabolic syndrome of 50 percent. So much for long naps.

Anyone who has driven a car for long distances knows the feeling of sleepiness. Driving while sleepy is extremely dangerous, yet many people push on. Sleep experts recommend that if you begin to feel drowsy while driving, you should immediately pull over in a rest area and take a 20-to 30-minute nap. After the nap, get out of the car and walk around for a couple minutes before hitting the road again.

A NASA study on military pilots and

astronauts found that a 40-minute nap improved performance by 34 percent and alertness by 100 percent. Naps can increase alertness in the time period directly following the nap and may extend alertness a few hours later in the day.

If there is such a thing as rules for napping, one would be to limit the time of the nap. Shoot for a nap of 30 minutes or less. The 30-minute nap will give you the best benefits for alertness and performance, without feeling groggy or sluggish. The short duration will not impact your normal nighttime sleep pattern either.

Take your naps earlier in the day. Try to not nap after 3 p.m. because if you nap too late in the day, you may affect your nighttime sleep pattern and make it difficult for you to fall asleep at your normal bedtime. If you try to nap too early in the day, your body may not be ready for more sleep.

Be certain to have a restful place to take your nap. Avoid sitting up in a chair in front of the television. Go to a room that is dark and quiet, and lay down. I like a room that is cooler and with a ceiling fan on. While some studies have indicated that just lying down is beneficial, it is still

better to catch some sleep.

We all know that diet and exercise is key to a healthy lifestyle and good physical conditioning. A proper night’s sleep is just as important as a component to good health. About one third of American adults do not get enough sleep, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Taking a nap at the wrong time or in the wrong place can be dangerous, especially around our house. In the interest of marital bliss, I have to hide somewhere from the “nap killer” if I want a power nap. Maybe she will read this and realize I am only napping as part of a healthy lifestyle. Then again, she might not.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a director for the Montrose County Sheriff’s Posse. For information about the posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email [info@mcspi.org](mailto:info@mcspi.org) For outdoors or survival related questions or comments, feel free to contact him directly at his email [elkhunter77@icloud.com](mailto:elkhunter77@icloud.com)



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