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# The Science of Sleep



By Sophie Fern

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# Why Do We Sleep?

Everyone sleeps. It's a natural part of life. Yet how much do we really know about it? Read on for an eye-opening exploration of the science of sleep.



Why do humans sleep? This is a simple question that does not have a simple answer. In fact, it doesn't have one real answer at all, but scientists have come up with a few possible ideas. These ideas are called theories.



## The Evolutionary Theory

Sleeping is a great way to save energy. In the days before supermarkets, we needed to save our energy for hunting, gathering, and preparing our food. Sleep was possibly a way of giving our bodies time off so we could spend our energy on important tasks during the day. Plus, being tucked into bed (or, thousands of years ago, a cave) when wild animals were roaming around in the darkness was a survival strategy. In the past, people who slept a lot saved important energy to avoid becoming a saber-toothed-cat snack. Some scientists think that this is still the main reason why we sleep.



▲ Sleeping is one survival strategy... sleeping *inside* is another!

## The Repair and Restoration Theory

Did you know that, while you sleep, your body repairs itself? Your body is made up of cells, some of which only live a few days, so you're always making more. This process is called **cell division**. When you sleep, cell division speeds up. Your body also makes **proteins** when you are asleep. Proteins are the building blocks of our bodies. They build your muscles. So, some scientists think that the main reason you sleep is to give your body enough time to repair and restore itself to a healthy and strong state.