



# BSA SAFETY MOMENT

## NAP ON SAFELY

### SUMMARY

**What can you do in 26 minutes to be more alert, make better decisions, and increase your performance?**

**Hint: “It’s free, it’s nontoxic, and it has no dangerous effects,” say the authors of *Take a Nap! Change Your Life* (Workman Publishing Company, 2006). The answer is in that title: Take a nap!**

### GENERAL INFORMATION

“Nap on Safely” isn’t the only way to nap, but it sure makes napping simple if you follow the plan:

1. How long do you have to nap?
  - a. Six minutes will enhance memory, 10–15 minutes can improve focus and productivity.
  - b. The NASA nap (26 minutes) is the optimal time for a performance enhancement of 34 percent and an overall alertness increase of 54 percent.
  - c. Extend that nap into the 40–60 minute range, and you will likely be groggy upon awakening as you didn’t finish the sleep cycle. Not good if you are already grumpy.
  - d. 90 minutes of napping can give you a boost of creativity as you finish a cycle. 90 minutes can also top off the sleep you missed the night before.
2. Plan to nap between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. so as to fit the circadian rhythm of most folks. Want everyone to be fresh at your evening campfire? Give them a program break, and schedule naps from 1:00–3:00 at the next campout or camporee.
3. Make sure you have a safe area and set-up. Make your room darker or cover your eyes (using two pirate patches, an eye mask, or an ostrich pillow). Lie down instead of sitting up. Good news for hammock campers: Hammocks are the best place to nap as the gentle swaying will help you go to sleep.
4. Set a timer. Remember, 26 minutes is optimal.
5. Need a super boost for your afternoon? Drink a cup of coffee BEFORE you lie down. Combining caffeinated coffee and a nap will make you feel invincible. (Of course, this is not recommended for youth; the target audience for this tip is the Scoutmaster.)

Napping can’t take the place of getting enough regular sleep. But it certainly may help you through the week at Scout camp or make up for staying up late around the campfire with your crew the night before.

Napping may also help you to

- Resist comfort foods and lose some excess weight.
- Lower your risk of cardiac disorders. Just knowing your nap is coming may lower your blood pressure!
- Reduce the risk of diabetes by lowering insulin and cortisol levels.
- Reduce stress and anxiety by lowering cortisol and releasing growth hormones.
- Combat driving fatigue on a long trip with an emergency nap.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Tips from the National Sleep Foundation: <https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-topics/napping>
- The Secret (and Surprising) Power of Naps: <http://www.webmd.com/balance/features/the-secret-and-surprising-power-of-naps>
- Napping: Do’s and Don’ts for Healthy Adults: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/napping/art-20048319>