



HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS

Description: Why is sleep important?

Long-term health depends on the regeneration that occurs during deep sleep. Growth hormone, or the “anti-aging” hormone, is secreted during sleep, which stimulates tissue regeneration, liver cleansing, muscle building, break down of fat stores and normalization of blood sugar. During sleep free radicals are scavenged in the brain, minimizing its aging. Many health problems are aggravated by inadequate sleep. Sleep gives us renewed vitality, a more positive outlook on life and energy with which we can become our full potential.

Symptoms (of inadequate sleep):

You could experience drowsiness, fatigue, decreased concentration, impaired memory, reduced stress tolerance, mood changes, irritability, muscle tension, or increased health problems such as infections.

Protocol (Improving the quality of your sleep)

1. Maintain consistent sleep and wake times. Do not push yourself to stay up past the initial signs of sleepiness. This can create epinephrine production, causing more difficulty getting to sleep later. It is good to have a “getting ready for bed” routine to relax and prepare your body for sleep. Avoid taking naps if you have trouble sleeping at night.
2. Reserve the bed for sleep and sex only. Do not read, watch TV, eat, or worry in bed. Solve daily dilemmas outside of the bedroom. If you find that you’ve been lying awake in bed for 15-20 minutes, get out of bed. Do something mundane until you feel sleepy, and then go back to bed. Repeat this as often as needed.
3. Your sleeping environment should be quiet, cool and comfortable. The room should be clutter-free. Reduce the amount of ambient light as much as possible. Electronic devices such as clocks, stereos, TVs and computers generate electromagnetic fields that can disturb sleep for some people. Experiment with moving these into another room or using EMF shields. Feng Shui, the Chinese art of placement, can be valuable in creating an optimal sleeping environment.

4. Exercise regularly. Exercising during the day or early evening decreases the time it takes to get to sleep and increases the amount of deep sleep obtained. Most people do better avoiding exercise late in the evening.
5. Exposure to sunlight early in the morning and late in the afternoon or evening encourages a strong circadian rhythm. The hormone melatonin, which helps create a sleep state in the body, is suppressed in light and secreted in darkness.
6. If you have problems with waking during the early hours of the morning, have a small protein snack just before bed to ensure consistent blood sugar levels throughout the night. Consistently get exposure to sunlight as late in the day as possible.
7. Improving overall health will improve the quality of your sleep. Work towards improving or eliminating health problems. Treatment modalities such as massage, acupuncture or cranial sacral will help to relax the body. Effective stress management is essential.

Things to relax the body to prepare for sleep:

- Warm baths, adding Epsom salts (4cups per bath) and/or lavender oil enhance the benefit
- Meditating for 5-30 minutes
- Progressive muscle relaxation (the process of contracting and then relaxing each area of the body in succession) is extremely helpful.
- Any other means of inducing the “relaxation response”. Including meditation, breathing practices, orgasm and relaxation visualization can be a wonderful part of a nightly ritual to enhance sleep given their ability to increase the relaxation response.
- Special acoustic recordings that increase specific brain wave patterns for relaxation and sleep are available and helpful.
- Botanicals treatments and aromatherapy using herbs and their essential oils (examples include chamomile, valerian, vervain (verbena), hops, lavender, passionflower, avena (oat straw), lemon balm and scutellaria (skull cap). Consult your physician for dosages and recommendations. Two of our favorite over the counter teas are Bedtime Tea by Yogi brands (2-4 bags in 8-12oz water) and Honey Chamomile by Tulsi brands (1-2 bags in 8-12oz water)
- Magnesium glycinate at 300mg 30 minutes before bed, can be very relaxing

Sleep Interference:

- Although alcohol may make you fall asleep, the sleep obtained after drinking is fragmented and light. Avoid alcohol to enhance the quality of your sleep.
- The stimulating effects of caffeine may last up to 10 or more hours in some people. Avoid it in the afternoon if getting to sleep is a problem. Caffeine is present in coffee, green tea, black tea, chocolate and some medications (pain

- relievers, decongestants, thermogenic weight loss products, energy supplements, etc.)
- The stimulating effects of nicotine (first- or second-hand smoke) can last several hours.
 - Sleeping pills, aside from being highly addictive and full of side effects, decrease the amount of time spent in deep sleep and only increase light sleep.
 - B-vitamin supplements can increase energy that keeps some people awake, if taken before bed. Take B-vitamins earlier in the day.
 - Low blood sugar at night can increase the likelihood of stress hormone production. Experiment with starchy carbohydrate timing at the last meal.
 - To aid falling asleep a good rule of thumb is to eat closer to bed and eat more slowly digesting carbohydrates at night (i.e. beans and/or whole grains) and add fat to these meals (i.e. peanut butter on whole grain bread).
 - To aid staying asleep eat closer to bed and make sure you eat more protein at your last meal.
 - If you wake in the middle of the night, a small snack or carbohydrate and fat can aid returning to sleep (i.e. spoonful of nut butter and half a banana).

Resources

1. Clinical practice of Dr. Jade Teta, Keoni Teta and Jillian Sarno Teta.
2. Dement MD PhD, William. *The Promise of Sleep*. 1999. Dell Publishing. New York, NY.
3. Jacobs PhD, Gregg. *Say Goodnight to Insomnia*. 1998. Henry Holt and Company. New York, NY.
4. Ross DC, Herbert, Brenner Lac, Keri and Goldberg, Burton. *Sleep Disorders*. <AlternativeMedicine.com> Tiburon, CA. 2000.