
◆ A New You ◆

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Improve Sleep in 10 Easy Steps

Sleep is an essential, yet often elusive part of everyday life. Too much or too little sleep can have serious consequences on health, happiness, relationships, work productivity and overall functioning. The ability to get to sleep, stay asleep and awaken rested and refreshed when it is time to get up is something that we all count on until it eludes us.

Sleep Problems

- Do you often have difficulty falling asleep?
- Do you often have difficulty staying asleep?
- Do you awaken in the middle of the night and find that you cannot return to sleep for a long time?
- Do you awaken early in the morning without being able to return to sleep?
- Do you feel like you aren't rested after awakening?
- Do you often snore during sleep?
- Do thoughts or worries often interrupt your sleep?
- Do children, pets, or a snoring spouse keep you from a good night's sleep?
- Do you have a changing sleep schedule do to work shifts?
- Do you have trouble sleeping at night but nap during the day?
- Do you sleep too much, sleeping late into the morning, or more than 10 hours per night?
- Do you use sleep to avoid other things?

These are all sleep problems that can negatively affect your health, happiness and functioning.

According to a study by the Better Sleep Council 65% of us lose sleep due to stress, 32% of us lose sleep at least once per week, and 16% of us experience stress-induced insomnia.



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What Contributes to Sleep Problems?

- Stress
- Family problems
- Financial problems
- Work problems
- Feeling overwhelmed with tasks
- Having too much or too little to do
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Current events
- Allergies
- Illness
- Sleep apnea
- Pain
- Menopause
- Bedroom temperature uncomfortable
- Children
- New baby
- Spouse snoring
- Napping during the day
- Irregular sleep schedule
- Shift work with changing schedules
- Caffeine
- Alcohol or drugs
- Uncomfortable mattress/pillows

Why Is Sleep Important?

Sleep is an essential and necessary part of life. It is as crucial to our health as air, water and food. Sleep is needed in order to help maintain mood, memory and cognitive functioning. During sleep your brain consolidates the day's learning into memory and helps to regulate and improve learning, mood and the ability to concentrate.

Sleep also repairs and reenergizes the body. During sleep the body repairs itself. Cells increase the production of proteins that are needed for cell growth and the repair of damage done by stress of all kinds. Sleep aids in the normal function of the endocrine and immune systems. An appropriate amount and quality of sleep may even help you to avoid such health problems as obesity, diabetes, hypertension and depression. During sleep the body secretes hormones that aid in growth, regulate energy, and control metabolism and endocrine functioning.

Growth hormone, which is secreted during sleep, helps to regulate muscle mass in adults and aids in growth in children. Other hormones released during sleep are important to reproduction and are believed to initiate puberty.

Appropriate amounts of sleep can help to regulate a healthy weight by secreting certain hormones, by reducing the risk of diabetes and by helping to limit the secretion of cortisol which can contribute to weight gain.

The Dangers of Sleep Deprivation

Sleep deprivation affects cognition and motor functioning in a dangerous way. One study showed that individuals who were awake for 19 hours scored worse on performance and alertness tests than people who were legally intoxicated. In addition, other studies have shown the following:

- One night of sleep deprivation lowers judgment, reaction time, recall and word reading.
- The loss of eight hours of sleep impairs alertness and memory. (So much for the "all nighter" studying session.)
- Sleep deprivation (three to seven hours per night) for seven consecutive nights can significantly impair alertness and motor performance.
- People with sleep apnea (a sleep disorder) scored as poorly on reaction-time tests as those who were legally intoxicated.
- Lack of sleep and subsequent drowsiness may be responsible for as many as 100,000 vehicle crashes and 1500 deaths related to driver drowsiness each year.
- Inadequate sleep increases irritability and anger, affects mood by increasing the risk of anxiety, depression and sadness, and contributes to conflicts.
- Sleep problems contribute to untold dollars lost due to unproductive, sleep deprived workers.
- The risk of weight gain, diabetes, hypertension and cardiac problems are all increased by sleep problems.

Improve Your Sleep in 10 Easy Steps

1. **Develop a regular bedtime routine**
2. **Go to bed and get up at the same time each day**
3. **Create a restful environment in the bedroom (cool, quiet, dark room with no eating, reading or watching television in bed)**
4. **Avoid exercise and eating within several hours before bed**
5. **Avoid caffeine, tobacco, alcohol and drugs**
6. **Lose weight to a healthy weight**
7. **Spend some time each day outside in the daylight (with sunscreen)**
8. **Try to avoid reliance on sleep medications**
9. **Keep paper and pen by the bed to jot down thoughts that run through your head (writing them down allows the mind to relax)**
10. **Practice relaxation, meditation, visualization and deep breathing**

Sleeping Better with Shift Work

Shift work can be extremely detrimental to sleep, particularly if your shifts are rotating. In fact, studies show that 10 to 20% of shift workers report falling asleep on the job. Shift workers also are at higher risk for poor performance, lack of alertness and more accidents.

If you have the opportunity to avoid shift work, consider making the change to a regular daylight shift. If you must work shifts, the following tips may be helpful:

- Expose yourself to bright light during wake time
- Keep your bedroom dark during sleep time
- A 20 minute nap in the middle of a night shift may improve alertness, performance and mood.

Typical Sleep Patterns of Children

- Newborns: sleep 16-17 hours/day, a few hours at a time. (about 7 sleep/wake periods throughout the day and night)
- 3 or 4 months: sleep 15 hours a day with about 4 or 5 sleep periods, 2/3 of which occur at night. Most infants are now sleeping through most of the night (from a late night feeding to early morning.)
- 6 months: sleep 12 hours a night with only occasional brief wakings with 2 naps each day.
- Between 3 to 6 months your baby should be sleeping better at night.
- Age 1: sleep about 14 hours a day
- Age 18mths to 3 years: 11-13 hours of sleep
- Age 4-12: 10 hours of sleep
- Teens: 8-9 hours sleep

Helping Babies & Children Sleep

Circadian rhythms or biological cycles (patterns of sleeping/waking, activity/rest, hunger/eating) repeat about every 25 hours. We as adults automatically reset our biological clock each day by using cues such as mealtimes, bedtime, and time of waking. This is one reason it is so important to have routines that give cues to you child about sleep times.

Due to changes in stages of sleep we all awaken during the night for brief moments. Generally we simply roll over and go back to sleep without even noticing it. If you always rock your child to sleep then he will need you to come and rock him back to sleep each time he awakens during the night. Rock your child only until he is drowsy and then put him down so that he learns to fall asleep on his own.

Make the bedtime a soothing, pleasant time for both you and your child with a regular calming routine.

Toddlers may need a “transitional object” a stuffed animal, doll, toy, or blanket to help fall asleep. This object helps him accept the nighttime separation from you and can reassure and comfort him when alone. If you always lay with him or come in to rock him to sleep then you become the transitional object and he always needs you when he wakes up.

Fears may arise around toilet training, starting preschool, or other events. These fears may interfere

Helping Babies & Children Sleep cont.

with sleep. If this happens, talk over the concerns during the day and try to keep bedtime routines as consistent and calming as possible. Fears include:

- Fear of monsters – the child's explanation for her fears (toileting accident, temper tantrum, anger) Be calm, firm and reassuring.
- Fear of dark – night lights may help.
- Bad dreams/nightmares – try to discover what may be causing anxiety or fears during the day.

Do You Have a Sleep Disorder?

Sleep apnea is a health condition in which breathing stops periodically during sleep, disrupting the quality of sleep. The word apnea means without breath. There are three types of sleep apnea. In all cases of sleep apnea people stop breathing repeatedly during sleep, often hundreds of times during the night for a minute or even longer.

Sleep apnea can be caused by a blockage of the airway, the brain failing to signal the muscles to breath, or a combination of these two factors. Whatever the cause, in sleep apnea, the sleeper is repeatedly briefly woken by the brain in order for breathing to resume. This results in disrupted and poor sleep. Sleep apnea is quite common, affecting more than twelve million Americans, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Risk factors of sleep apnea include being male, overweight and over the age of 40, however sleep apnea can occur in anyone at any age.

Consequences of sleep apnea include:

- High blood pressure and cardiovascular disease
- Increased risk of sudden death at night
- Memory problems
- Weight gain
- Impotence
- Headaches
- Irritability
- Job impairment
- Accidents

If you believe you may have sleep apnea, see your physician immediately.

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If you are interested in purchasing a CD - Music to Promote Sleep by Dr. Lee R. Bartel, please contact our office at 412.492.0644 ext. 40. This CD is scientifically designed to calm the mind and help facilitate deep, restful sleep.

If you would like to discuss how we can help you to improve your sleep, call today at 412-492-0644 ext. 40 so that we can match you with the most appropriate clinician for your needs. Psychotherapy as well as Hypnotherapy can generally be quite helpful for improving sleep.

Please feel free to share this newsletter with others who may be interested. If you would like more copies, please call the office at 412-492-0644 ext. 40.

