

Hope & Healing

Sleep Dealing with Disturbed Sleep

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction _____

Going to bed is for many people among the day's most pleasant experiences. Many others worry about not getting enough sleep. How much sleep is enough and what happens to us if we don't get a certain amount of sleep is not clear. Why we need sleep at all and the relationship of sleep to health have been investigated by scientists for years. The answer are incomplete. Researchers, however, have uncovered a great deal about what takes place during sleep, what disturbs sleep, and how to improve sleep.

The Sleep Cycle _____

During a night's sleep you will alternate between two phases of sleep. These are called REM (Rapid Eye Movement) and Non-REM.

Non-REM sleep begins when you first fall asleep and is called the "quiet sleep." The body is still, the brain's activity becomes slow and regular and the five senses shut down. As the night progresses the non-REM phase of sleep moves through four states of sleep that get deeper and deeper until you reach the final stage, the delta stage. The body's ability to restore itself from the day's stresses is at the highest level during delta sleep. As your brain moves beyond delta sleep it switches into REM sleep. Abruptly your eyes begin to dart behind your closed eyelids, your heartbeat and metabolism pick up, your breathing gets fast and irregular and your toes and fingers twitch. Yet your arms and legs remain still. If you dream, it will be during this stage of sleep. The first episode of REM sleep ends after about ten minutes. Then, you will return

to non-REM sleep and repeat the cycle.

Throughout the night you will sleep through four or five cycles, each lasting about ninety minutes. Near the time to awake, the final REM phase will last for 30 to 40 minutes. Then, you wake up.

The Benefits of Sleep _____

There is little doubt that the purpose of sleep is to restore our bodies and minds. Studies show that delta sleep is the time when most of our growth hormone is released. Growth hormone is thought to renew worn-out tissues. It also stimulates the creation of new bone and new blood cells. Perhaps this is how sleep restores us.

A good night's sleep is whatever allows us to feel refreshed, alert, and in good spirits the next day. For some this will be nine or ten hours; for others it will be six. And, how solidly you sleep is as important as the amount of sleep.

Sleep and Age _____

Age is the most important factor affecting sleep. Babies sleep twice as much as grownups. After age twelve sleep patterns are about like those of adults.

The next dramatic sleep shift appears in the elderly. In about 80% of people over sixty, sleep is more fragmented. They sleep lighter and wake up more often and for longer periods of time during the night and early morning.

Troubled Sleep _____

From national surveys, many adults have trouble with insomnia — a term that

means that we can't get to sleep, or can't stay asleep.

Insomnia is most often caused by a specific stressful situation, such as a divorce, a financial problem, or a change in job. Once these problems are solved, the insomnia usually clears up.

Chronic insomnia can be caused by living in a dangerous neighborhood, or by pain from arthritis or by too much noise or too hot a bedroom. With chronic insomnia, the harder you try to fall asleep, the more anxious you become, which makes sleep all the more unlikely. And, what you do to solve your insomnia may end up being the wrong thing to do, napping excessively, for example, or taking sleeping pills, or spending too much time in bed.

Sleeping Pills _____

Prescription sleeping pills are among the most frequently taken drugs in America. Yet, they end up reducing deep sleep and frequently cause tiredness during the day. If sleeping pills are taken each night, the body becomes used to them in less than a week.

At best a sleeping drug should be used occasionally and never more than three nights in a row. Pregnant women, people with kidney or liver trouble, those on medications, and older people should avoid sleeping medications if at all possible. Never drink alcohol if you are also taking sleeping pills.

Napping for Energy _____

Between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m., the temperature of our bodies will drop slightly and we become sleepy. Studies show that this period is the best nap time. These guidelines can help you get the most from your nap:

- Plan for early afternoon as a nap time. Morning or late daytime napping can interfere with your night time sleep.
- Keep your nap under an hour — more than that won't increase the benefits.

Getting a Good Night's Sleep _____

Try the following to sleep better:

- Avoid strenuous exercise immediately before bedtime.
- Avoid caffeine within two to four hours of bedtime.
- Avoid cigarettes near bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol near bedtime.
- Relax an hour or so before going to bed.
- Avoid loud music, big meals, heated arguments, and exciting TV shows before bedtime.
- Keep your bedroom quiet, dark and between 60 and 65 degrees.
- Learn a relaxation technique or count sheep to slow down your body and mind.
- If possible, have sex before sleep.
- Drink a glass of warm milk with honey. Both contain small amounts of L tryptophan which is believed to cause sleepiness.

Improving Troubled Sleep _____

- Establish a regular routine, but don't go to bed until you are sleepy. Use the bedroom for only sex and sleep.
- No matter when you go to sleep, get up at the same time each day. Avoid naps if you have trouble getting to sleep.
- If you can't get off to sleep right away, cut your time in bed by an hour or more until 90% of your time in bed is spent sleeping. Then add back the time you took away in 15 minute segments. This should increase the efficiency of your sleep by making you fall asleep more quickly and making you sleep more soundly.
- If your insomnia problem is severe, ask your doctor to refer you to a sleep disorder clinic to see if there is an underlying medical problem.

Summary _____

There are many things you can do to improve sleep. One that is now under investigation is to participate in an exercise plan three days a week or more. Use naps to boost your daytime energy. Even a 5 minute, 10 minute or 15 minute nap can keep you sharp for routines that are demanding. When you are well rested you are better able to deal with the problems of life.

Awaken the Miracles Within You

The Miracle of Joy

If we really believe in God's existence, our joy is obvious. Even when conditions are tough for awhile, we know in our hearts that such things are only a snapshot, not the entire movie.

All power is God's. And God is good. So, life must be good also. Once you know this, it can only be matter of time before you radiate health and happiness.

Think about it. Do you get a better reception with a smile or with a face like a prune? Who will possibly want to hear about your faith if you have a prune face?

We've seen frozen and joyless smiles, but they are not real. So, smile, even if it hurts. And, keep it up, until it becomes spontaneous, as it will

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.