

W.O.W.

WAC ON WELLNESS

SLEEP MANAGEMENT

A good night's sleep can be elusive to many, but a necessity for all of us. So, what is a good night's sleep? For that matter what is sleep? What are the impacts of poor quality sleep? And most important, what can we do to get a better night's sleep?

According to Harvard Health Publication's Harvard Mental Health Letter, sleep occurs in 90-minute, two stage cycles. The first cycle can be divided into four stages. Each subsequent stage of this cycle leads to a deeper sleep, drop in heart and breathing rates, blood pressure, and body temperature, along with relaxing of muscles. The deepest sleep (the fourth stage) boosts the immune system. The second cycle is REM (Rapid Eye Movement); it is when people dream. During this cycle breathing and heart rates, along with body temperature and blood pressure increase to that of when awake. The REM stage enhances memory and learning, as well as contributes to emotional health.

A poor night's sleep can consist of short bouts of disrupted sleep, sleep that is not restful or one that is less than 6 hours. Just one bad night, according to sleep consultant Dr. Neil Stanley, leads to the individual becoming four-times as likely to catch a cold. A night of low quality sleep causes the individual to suffer from a decrease in motivation, suppression of the immune system, less empathy, slower reaction time, poor concentration, and an increase in appetite. Long-term poor quality sleep can contribute to an increased risk of some cancers, diabetes, Alzheimer's, obesity, cognitive decline, depression and heart disease.

Per Helen Foster, health journalist and author, there are three things you need to sleep: decreased light to release the hormone melatonin, a drop of body temperature, and the mind and body to relax, leading to the nervous system "shutting down". So, how can you help your body to reach these hallmarks of a good night's sleep? Read on to find out!

1. Unplug from electronics at least an hour before bed. The blue light emitted from our computers, phones and laptops trick the body into thinking it is day, and not night time for bed, interrupting the body as it prepares for sleep.
2. Limit or eliminate caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol. The first two are stimulant, the later, though a depressant, wears off after a few hours causing a person to wake up.
3. Stick with a sleep-wake schedule, even on weekends.
4. Regular aerobic activity aids in a good night sleep, the exerciser spending greater amounts of time in deep sleep (think stage 4 and immune system boost).
5. Keep T.V.'s, computers and the like out of the bedroom, use this space only for sleep or sex.
6. Meditation, guided imagery, deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation can help ease the body into turning off for the night. Multiple apps are available to assist in this process. Some are Nature Sounds Relax and Sleep, Pzizz Sleep, Sleep Genius, Sleep Cycle, and Sleep Android.

By using the above techniques a good quality sleep is just around the corner. Happy sleeping!

Visit www.thewac.com/wellnesscoaching for more information on our Wellness Program and Coaches.



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