

Better Sleep

Awareness

May 2016

- Inadequate sleep can lead to an increase in blood pressure and stress hormone production; the body can become stressed when it does not get enough sleep.
- The consequences of poor sleep include reduced concentration, mood swings, irritability, stress, and a weakened immune system. The release of stress hormones can also make it harder to sleep, perpetuating an unhealthy sleep cycle.
- In severe cases, poor sleep may be linked to serious problems including narcolepsy, insomnia, restless leg syndrome and sleep apnea. Better Sleep Month helps to make more people aware of these problems; advice from a suitable health professional should be sought if any of these consequence are experienced.

Psychological & Physical Factors Affect Sleep

- There are many physical and psychological factors which can cause poor sleep; stress is a common cause.
- Worries such as elder care, childcare, family conflicts, problems with personal relationships, financial concerns & other anxieties can all interrupt healthy sleep patterns. Physical factors which can affect sleep include pain, excess sweating, need to urinate, noise (including snoring by a bed partner) & light levels.
- Stress can elevate blood pressure; heart attack and stroke are well documented risks of high blood pressure.
- Gender can also play a role in sleep disturbance. Michael Breus, Ph.D author of 'Beauty Sleep: Look Younger, Lose Weight, and Feel Great Through Better Sleep', believes that women are generally more sleep deprived than man.
- Further factors which disrupt sleep include excitement, depression, anxiety, and caffeine intake close to bed time; environmental factors include, room temperature, light levels, humidity, bedding and noise.

- There is recent evidence which suggests achieving better quality sleep may be more important than increasing the number of hours sleep. The National Sleep Council, which supports Better Sleep Month, have reported that people who sleep between 6 and 7 hours a night actually live longer than those who sleep for 8 hours.
- Many experts believe that between 7.5 and 8.5 hours of sleep a night is optimal. However, better sleep does not refer to just the length of time we sleep.
- 6 hours of deep refreshing sleep is more beneficial than 8 hours of light interrupted sleep.

Tips To Get Better Sleep:

- Establish a consistent sleep schedule by sleeping at the same time each day of the week (including weekends).
- Relax before sleeping. Prior to sleep, limit any stimulating activities such as exercise and work. Perform activities that you may find relaxing such as reading.
- Create an optimal sleeping environment. Your place of sleep should be dark, ventilated and of an appropriate temperature. Black out blinds can help seal out light in area. If possible, remove any distractions such as computers and TVs from the room. Ensure your bedding is of adequate quality and there is enough space in the bed if you share the bed with a partner (or a pet!).
- A healthy lifestyle consisting of exercise and a healthy diet can contribute towards better sleep. Avoid alcohol, nicotine and caffeine close to bed time. Whilst alcohol may help some people to relax, it can disrupt sleep throughout the night.

Reference

- Better sleep month. Retrieved from: www.Whatthehealth.com/awareness/eventbetter/html.