

How Your Sleeping Habits are Affecting Your Health

HOW MANY HOURS SLEEP DO YOU THINK IS APPROPRIATE EACH NIGHT?

Would you be surprised to know that on average it is recommended to get at least 7 hours of sleep a day? According to The American Academy of Sleep Medicine and the Sleep Research Society, 1 in 3 adults (ages 18-60) sleep less than 7 hours each night.

Sleeping less than 7 hours for adults has shown an increased risk of critically disturbing the body and brain, causing weight gain, increasing impulsive behavior and the potential of memory loss.

⁽²⁾ Increased risk of diabetes, high blood pressure and thyroid deregulation are also side effects of not getting the right amount of sleep.

Our bodies produce a natural substance called leptin, which is a hormone produced to trigger our "fullness" or satiety feeling and it is lessened when we are sleep deprived. At the same time, ghrelin which is a hormone that triggers hunger, is heightened. Results of one study conducted at the University of Chicago in Illinois showed that when sleep was restricted, leptin levels went down and ghrelin levels went up, appetite increased proportionally, and the desire for high carbohydrate, calorie-dense foods increased by a whopping 45%.⁽³⁾ Researchers suspect these cravings were

due to the fact that your brain is fueled by glucose, therefore, when lack of sleep occurs, your brain searches for carbohydrates. When we eat carbohydrates, blood sugar levels increase. As a response, insulin is then released to manage concentrations of glucose, keeping it in optimal range. The American Diabetes Association reports that people who regularly do not get enough sleep can become less sensitive to insulin, increasing their risk for diabetes and high blood pressure.⁽⁴⁾

Sleep deprivation also can affect the thyroid. One study showed that after 6 days of only getting 4 hours of sleep, the normal nocturnal thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) rise was strikingly decreased, and the overall mean TSH levels were reduced by more than 30%.⁽⁵⁾ TSH stimulates the production of T4 and T3 which fuels the metabolism of almost every tissue in the body. Dr. Nikolas R. Hedberg, author of the book "The Thyroid

Alternative", expressed that any patients who suffer from insomnia and sleep problems also possess low thyroid symptoms and abnormal TSH levels.⁽⁶⁾

What can you do to improve your sleep habits?

Many people will try turning to medications or the vitamin Melatonin to help with them sleep. The issue with Melatonin is that it can only sometimes be used as a sleep and body clock regulator, but not a permanent sleep initiator. According to research conducted at MIT, the effective dosage of melatonin is 0.3 – 1.0 mg. Most bottles of Melatonin at your local super market or health food store contains 3-10 times the amount your body would need.⁽⁸⁾ If you use Melatonin regularly to sleep, your body's natural production will lessen, creating even greater dependency for the hormone. There are better options out there to help as a temporary fix while you figure

out the root cause of your sleep issues.

What you should be using as a natural sleep aid is Valerian Root. The well-known original founders of medicine Hippocrates and Galen have documented and used Valerian for cases involving insomnia. Just what exactly is it? Valerian Root is a perennial plant native to North America and Europe. It has a yellow brown tuberous rootstock (part used medicinally) which produces a flowering stem about 2-4 feet high. It was discovered almost 2,000 years ago and has been well documented on its sedative effects and used to promote relaxation and sleep. It is often times noted or referred to as "Nature's Valium". Unlike the typical medication used to help with sleep, Valerian is not at all addictive. ⁽⁸⁾ Medications used to help with insomnia are associated with such side effects as drowsiness or reduced concentration upon awakening. When taking Valerian Root there are no side effects associated with reaction time, concentration and alertness. In fact, one study in particular used a double-blind test on 102 male and female participants. Participants were examined on reaction time, alertness, and concentration levels following the treatment of Valerian root. The first examination was done the morning after a single dose of either the Valerian Root(600mg) extract, flunitrazepam(medication for

insomnia) (1mg) or the placebo. Then the participants continued with the program for 2 weeks and were retested again. It was noted that those on Valerian Root had no visible reduction of reaction time, concentration or coordination.

If you are in search of other ways to help reduce the need for medication or Melatonin to sleep, check out the natural tips and tricks listed below:

1. Get into a regular exercise routine. Aerobic activity can help stimulate circulation, hormones and serotonin production. Serotonin is associated with mood, sleep, appetite, memory and learning.

2. Find a bedtime routine that helps make you feel relaxed and repeat it each night to help regulate your internal clock. Examples include reading, taking a hot bath, writing in a journal, meditation and prayer. Avoid using tablets, laptops, TV or smart phone before bed.

3. Avoid drinking a lot of liquid right before bed to reduce the number of times you get up to urinate.

4. Avoid stimulants such as caffeine several hours before bed.

5. Avoid alcohol which will keep you from entering the deeper stages of sleep.

6. Avoid carbohydrate rich night-time snacks and include more protein rich foods. Protein can provide the L-tryptophan needed to produce melatonin and serotonin.

7. Formula 303- 2 tablets before bed time acts as a natural relaxant and contains valerian root which is used to calm your nerves and mood.

8. Get your Vitamin D levels checked. Lower levels of Vitamin D have been linked towards depression and low serotonin levels.

9. Consider supplementing with magnesium. A magnesium deficiency is one of the most common symptoms of insomnia. Those who have low magnesium may experience restless sleep or waking up frequently during the night. Magnesium helps support healthy levels of GABA, which is a type of neurotransmitter that promotes sleep. ⁽¹⁰⁾

It is important to discuss with your nutrition expert your sleeping habits and medications. Could it just be as simple as getting into a nightly routine? Sure. Or perhaps could it be something more important going on? Underlying deficiencies and toxicities can be tested with a comprehensive blood panel and hair test which, in turn, can help direct you towards the proper nutrients you need for your body. Get tested today and see how to enhance your body's foundation towards optimal wellness...and a full night's rest.

Works Cited:

1. "CDC Newsroom." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 18 Feb. 2016, www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2016/p0215-enough-sleep.html.
2. Society for Neuroscience. "Disruption Of Circadian Rhythms Affects Both Brain And Body, Mouse Study Finds." *ScienceDaily*, 28 Oct. 2009. Web. May 2018
3. Bouchez, Colette. Losing Weight While You Sleep. *WebMD* Jan 1, 2007. <http://www.webmd.com/diet/features/lose-weight-while-sleeping>. Accessed on 29, May 2018
4. The Franklin Institute Online. Renew-Sleep and Stress. 2004. <http://www.fi.edu/learn/brain/sleep.html>. Accessed on 28, November 2012
5. Van Cauter, Eve. Knutson, Kristen. [et.al](#) The Impact of Sleep Deprivation on Hormones and Metabolism. *Medscape Neurology*. 2005;7(1)
6. Dr. Hedberg, Nikolas. The Thyroid and Thyroid Hormones. The Immune Restoration Center. February 8, 2011
7. Dr. Breus, Michael. Melatonin: Not a magic bullet for sleep. September 24, 2010. <http://www.doctoroz.com/videos/melatonin-not-magic-bullet-sleep>. Accessed on 28, November 2012
8. Fitness. "Valerian Root: Nature's Valium." *POPSUGAR Tech*, 10 Apr. 2007, www.popsugar.com/fitness/Valerian-Root-Nature-Valium-201025.
9. Kuhlmann J, Berger W, Podzuweit H, Schmidt U. The influence of valerian treatment on "reaction time, alertness and concentration" in volunteers. *Pharmacopsychiatry* 1999;32:235-241
10. "Magnesium - How It Affects Your Sleep." *Your Guide to Better Sleep*, TheSleepDoctor, 29 Jan. 2018, www.thesleepdoctor.com/2017/11/20/magnesium-effects-sleep/.