



*Getting A Good
Night's Sleep*

ProHealth Nutrition, Inc

*Find Simple Tips On Sleeping Through The
Night*

DISCLAIMER: This information is not presented by a medical practitioner and is for educational and informational purposes only. The content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read.

Since natural and/or dietary supplements are not FDA approved they must be accompanied by a two-part disclaimer on the product label: that the statement has not been evaluated by FDA and that the product is not intended to "diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any dis-ease."

HOW TO GET A GOOD NIGHTS' SLEEP

Table of Contents

What Causes Insomnia and Who Suffers From It?

The Types of Insomnia and Its Impact on One's Health The Interrelationship of Depression and Insomnia

What Symptoms Indicate A Serious Sleeping Disorder?

Sleeping Disorders #1 - Night Eating Syndrome

Sleeping Disorders #2 - Restless Legs Syndrome

Sleeping Disorders #3 - Circadian Rhythms Syndrome

Sleeping Disorders #4 - Conditioned Insomnia

Sleeping Disorders #5 - Sleep Apnea

Who Gets Sleep Apnea?

How Sleep Apnea Manifests Insomnia?

Insomnia In Infants and Children

Treating Insomnia - Do OTC Meds Work?

Curing Insomnia With Behavior Modification.

What Are The Long Term Effects of Insomnia?

It is commonplace for several people to suffer at least an occasional night of almost non-existent sleep. The causes of insomnia differ from person to person. What made a student insomniac varies from what caused a shift worker or a traveler or an employee to acquire such sleeping disorder.

Insomnia, which is the inability to sleep satisfactorily or to have any sleep at all, is one of the most common sleep disorders. It is characterized by restlessness, sleep interruptions, decreased sleeping time than the usual, or sometimes complete wakefulness.

Aside from the annoyance that insomnia can cause to its sufferers, this sleep disorder causes those afflicted to lose enthusiasm and energy, acquire memory and concentration problems, feel lethargic, frustrated, and of course sleepy. Worse cases that may be induced by insomnia is one's being prone to accidents, reduced work productivity and the aggravation of psychological and medical conditions.

So what exactly are the culprits that make insomnia one menacing sleeping problem?

1. Emotional Distress

More particularly when it is from internalized anxiety or anger, emotional problems can easily trigger this sleep disorder.

2. Substance Abuse

Drinking too much coffee, colas or other "energy-upper drinks" is known to cause insomnia. Caffeine from these drinks is the main reason. Chain smokers can also be easy victims of insomnia because of the nicotine that cigarettes contain. Herbal remedies, alcohol and other medications can also make one prone to becoming an insomniac. Some may think that alcohol, when consumed, can make one feel drowsy. But little did they know that in the long run, when the alcohol gets metabolized, sudden wakefulness will follow.

3. Biological Clock Disturbance.

Also known as circadian rhythm, one's body clock, when altered, can damage the amount of sleep one can peacefully enjoy. This body clock disturbance can be caused by an irregular slumber schedule because of too much siesta or partying too late at night. It can also be jetlag or body clock disturbance due to traveling by plane to some place where there is a different time zone. Other causes may be the graveyard schedules of workers and cramming review season for students induced by exams.

4. Environmental Factors

Extreme temperatures can disrupt one's sleeping patterns. Noise and bright lights can have the same effect too. Homesickness or when one is forced to sleep in an unfamiliar place is also one reason behind getting into the habit of not having enough sleep.

5. Health Problems

Health disorders such as diabetes, heart failure, hyperthyroidism, ulcers, and Parkinson's disease can also induce insomnia. Asthma may also be one health problem that makes one prone to insomnia because of an asthmatic's shortness of breath. Frequent urination, heartburn, and chronic pain from leg cramps, tooth ache and arthritis can also cause insomnia.

Psychiatric conditions such as schizophrenia and depression are also possible culprits for insomnia. Snoring with prolonged pauses in breathing while at sleep, also known as sleep apnea can also cause insomnia. Periodic arm and leg movements during sleep causing the muscles to twitch excessively is one underlying cause of this sleep disorder. Another cause is narcolepsy or one's lack of control on whether to stay awake or to fall asleep, is another cause of this sleep disorder.

6. Pre-bedtime Activities

Engaging to vigorous activities such as exercise just right before bedtime can deprive one of a good night's sleep. Consuming large meals when one is just about to sleep can also make one experience this sleeping disorder. This is because when metabolism is at its most active thus the body prompts one to stay awake.

Who are Prone to Insomnia?

Reports have it that 90% of people can acquire transient insomnia at some point in their lives. While an estimate of 30% suffers from its chronic form.

a. Women are said to be more at risk in acquiring insomnia because of the following reasons:

- Pre-menstrual syndrome with symptoms of irritability, depression and anxiety, and bloating due to menstruation disturbs a woman's sleeping pattern.
- Menopause can also change a woman's sleeping pattern.
- Pregnancy makes sleeplessness one common thing to happen.

b. Elderly people are also prone to getting insomnia because ageing alters one's sleeping patterns.

c. Depressed people have lighter slumbers compared to those who don't feel this psychological condition.

d. Students or younger ones who are conscious with their grades (because of cramming) can easily become insomniacs too.

With that vast information on what causes insomnia and who are at risk with this sleeping disorder, one can easily ward off this annoying condition.

The Types of Insomnia and Its Impact on One's Health

Enough sleep and rest is important to every living creature since it aids the body in replenishing the energy consumed during the day.

Insomnia, by itself, is not a disease. It may be a symptom of a physical and emotional imbalance or just manifestation of fatigue caused by lack of sleep.

This condition is manifested by any of the following: a) light, interrupted sleep that one is still tired upon waking up, b) not being able to sleep, even if fatigued, c) lack of sleeping hours.

Types of Insomnia

Although this condition is usually temporary, insomnia may be classified based on the length of time it has affected the patient.

* Transient insomnia

This condition remains only for a few days. Transient insomnia is commonly caused by stress or as a direct response to change. It is sometimes called adjustment sleep disorder.

The disorder may develop after a traumatic event or even during minor changes such as traveling or weather changes.

Caffeine and nicotine are also observed to affect sleeping patterns. Caffeine, which is present in coffee, and nicotine, present in cigarettes, can cause transient insomnia.

In most cases, treatment for transient insomnia is not necessary. It usually resolves after a few days once the person was able to adjust to the new situations or surroundings.

* Short-term insomnia

Short-term insomnia lasts for three weeks or less. Short-term insomnia and transient insomnia are almost similar in their causes.

Female hormonal changes can affect sleep patterns. One of the female hormones, progesterone, promotes sleep. During menstruation, when its levels are low, women may experience insomnia. On the other hand, during ovulation, the increase in progesterone levels increases sleepiness.

Fluctuations in the level of progesterone during pregnancy and menopause cause altered sleeping patterns leading to transient insomnia. Although women after 50 also experience chronic insomnia, this is usually caused by psychological or emotional factors.

Changes in working conditions, such as shifting schedules, also cause short-term insomnia. Also, people who tend to overwork get less sleep than the average. In one study, insomnia was also observed in people doing much computer work.

Light can also affect one's sleep. Too much light at night can disrupt sleep or even prevent sleepiness. Likewise, less light during the day, as in disabled or elderly patients who rarely go out can also cause short-term insomnia. This is because the levels of melatonin responding to darkness.

Melatonin is a hormone secreted by the pineal gland, a pea-sized gland at the center of the brain, that help regulate the cycles of sleeping and waking up.

* Chronic insomnia - when a person couldn't sleep, has interrupted sleep, or is still tired after sleeping; and the condition recurs for more than two nights every week for more than one month. Also, it is characterized when the patient is fatigued and believes that his daily activities are affected by this sleeping condition.

Based on the causes, chronic insomnia may be further characterized into primary or secondary:

* Primary chronic insomnia - when the insomnia is not caused by any physical or mental imbalance.

* Secondary chronic insomnia - may be caused by physical and mental conditions, such as depression, or emotional and psychiatric disorders.

In one study, in industrialized nations, chronic insomnia affects about ten percent of adults.

Insomnia can affect a patient during daytime when patient may experience sleepiness in the mornings or in the afternoon. Some, despite their sleepiness report failure to nap. Even worse, another group reported excessive energy during the day. These people are more anxious and even more irritable.

Due to failure to get enough rest, these people have reduced concentration. If someone has preexisting medical condition, such as and orthopedic pain or arthritis, this may be worsened by insomnia.

When one suspects that he or she has insomnia, consulting a doctor would be the best advised. One of these therapies may also be tried.

* Minimizing consumption of caffeine containing beverages. This includes coffee, colas and chocolate. It is advised to restrict consumption after 3pm. For most people, these substances are eliminated from the body in a few hours. But some people have slow biologic elimination process, which caffeine can stay in the body longer than the average.

* People can also limit stay in bed during the sleeping hours. This is effective to increase the tendency to sleep when in bed.

When none of these procedures work, one should consult a specialist for other therapies or if a medication is needed.

The Interrelationship of Depression and Insomnia

Insomnia is a sleeping disorder characterized by any of the following: a) light, interrupted sleep that one is still tired upon waking up, b) not being able to sleep, even if fatigued, c) lack of sleeping hours.

Insomnia can be classified into three types based on the length of time it affects an individual.

Transient insomnia lasts only a few days and is usually due to changes in living or working conditions, which may be minor or traumatic.

Short-term insomnia, or acute transient insomnia, lasts for less than three weeks and has similar causes as transient insomnia.

Chronic insomnia, on the other hand, is more complex. This condition is characterized by one of the following: a) light, interrupted sleep that one is still tired upon waking up, b) not being able to sleep, even if fatigued, c) lack of sleeping hours.

Based on the causes, chronic insomnia may be considered as primary or secondary:

* Primary chronic insomnia - when the insomnia is not caused by any physical or mental imbalance.

* Secondary chronic insomnia - may be caused by physical and mental conditions, such as depression, or emotional and psychiatric disorders.

Since insomnia is just a symptom of an underlying disease or an imbalance, evaluating the cause of insomnia is very important before prescribing any medication.

Depression is the most common cause of chronic insomnia, especially in the elderly.

A study shows that depressed elderly patients, if they suffer from insomnia, have a tendency to be depressed for over a year.

Another study shows that even without a history of depression, if an elderly patient suffers from insomnia, they have a high risk of being depressed. This is usually observed in women.

It has been proven that insomnia can affect ones' lifestyle negatively. Once this happens, the person starts to worry. Worrying, then causes depression.

Depression is an emotional condition characterized by sadness or misery. Although many have experienced this at one time, clinical depression is a mood disorder characterized by feelings of sadness, anger or frustration affect daily life for an extended period of time.

Another interesting relationship between depression and disrupted sleep is that some medications used for depression can cause insomnia. This is because these medications are used to make the patient more energetic, that at times, these make the patient anxious.

The new anti-depressants that have stimulant effects include Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft and other serotonin-reuptake inhibitors. Serotonin-reuptake inhibitors are substances that prevent the reabsorption of substances in the kidney. During the biological elimination process of substances taking place in the kidney, some substances are reabsorbed in the kidneys, thus, prolonging the effect of such substances.

With the presence of serotonin-reuptake inhibitors, serotonin is not reabsorbed and is continued to be eliminated from the body.

Serotonin is an important monoamine neurotransmitter that plays a large role in depression, anxiety and bipolar disorders. Some serotonin is converted by the pineal gland, the pea-sized gland at the center of the brain, into melatonin. Melatonin is a hormone that helps regulate the sleeping and waking cycles.

In addition to the prescribed medications to treat insomnia, a patient may also practice the following procedures to combat insomnia.

- * Control exposure to caffeine, alcohol and nicotine.

These three substances are known to disrupt one's normal sleeping patterns.

- * Maintain regular sleeping time and waking time.

This would help in maintaining the circadian rhythm thus minimizing the effects of fatigue caused by insomnia.

- * Regular exercise is good for the body but this shouldn't be done late in the afternoon or early in the evening.

This is because exercise tends to start-up the body. If the body has gained more energy by the end of the day, this can prevent one from being able to sleep at night.

- * Go to bed only when about to sleep. Reading or watching TV in bed is discouraged or to be avoided.

When the mind is conditioned that the bed is for sleeping, once one goes to bed, he or she can readily get some sleep.

- * Eat meals regularly.

Meal intake affects biological activities due to increased blood flow to the stomach.

These pointers may be helpful in managing conditions associated with insomnia. Still, some situations require sleep-promoting medications prescribed by a medical specialist.

What Symptoms Indicate A Serious Sleeping Disorder?

The experience of illness precipitates many stressful feelings and reactions like anxiety, anger, denial, shame, guilt, and uncertainty. The diagnostic tests, the medical treatment, the prognosis, the body changes, the reactions of family and friends, the experience of hospitalization, and the projected changes in life style—all take part in a person's adaptation to the new situation.

No wonder why there are certain conditions that are not treated immediately because most people who experience them are ashamed of admitting them or are not the least aware that they have them.

Take for example the sleeping disorders. A lot of people are not aware that such conditions exist. They just thought that simple matters that occur during their sleep are just the effects of other factors such as physical stress, fatigue, etc.

While these factors may contribute to the conditions of sleeping disorders, there are still other reasons that trigger these alarming conditions. What people don't know is that there are symptoms that may seem too ordinary to get worried but are, in reality, already signs of serious conditions or a greater risk in sleeping disorder.

According to some scientific reports and findings, more or less 33% of the entire population experience sleeping disorders. One of the most common sleeping disorders is Insomnia and sleep apnea ranking second on the list.

Usually, there are signs or symptoms of sleeping disorders that are already manifested or prevalent but are still neglected due to the fact that an individual lacks information about the condition or is not the least aware of what these symptoms mean.

That is why it is important for an individual to know these symptoms so as to know what necessary measures and actions should be taken immediately.

Here's the list:

1. Restless sleep at night.

There are people who cannot sleep restfully at night. These people have the tendency to toss and turn while they are trying to get some stable sleeping pattern.

Restless sleeping goes to show that the body is responding to a certain stimulus that triggers some activities. These may mean stuffed nose that leads to difficulty in breathing.

Hence, restless sleep is a good indicator that a person is experiencing sleeping disorder.

First, if the person is having difficulty in breathing even while sleeping would definitely lead to snoring or sleep apnea. These are two of the known sleeping disorders which when taken for granted may cause serious health problems or even death.

2. Sleeping during daytime or generally falls asleep most of the time.

People who are suffering from these kinds of symptoms are known to have sleeping disorders. This goes to show that the person is having a difficulty in staying awake.

These conditions are vital indicators of a certain sleeping disorder known as narcolepsy.

Narcolepsy has no known cause. However, it is usually characterized by excessive sleeping during daytime, in spite of the fact that the person had enough sleep during the night.

Studies show that those who usually fall asleep during the day, without any justifiable reason is said to be suffering from narcolepsy.

What's worse is that the attack usually occurs without notice or tell-tale signs. There are, in fact, some cases wherein people just doze off unexpectedly, even if they are doing something, say, watching the television or even walking.

3. Snoring while sleeping.

There are instances wherein people snore while sleeping. Because it is so common to almost anybody who sleeps, most people tend to think that snoring is just a part of sleeping and is a normal behavior. They even associate snoring with too much fatigue and stress, that is why, they consider it too common to get worried.

The only thing people get worried is when the snoring is already causing too much trouble with the couple or to those who are around them.

What people don't know is that snoring may be the primary indicator of a person who has more serious sleeping disorder aside from snoring itself.

Excessive snoring may lead to other serious sleeping disorder such as sleep apnea. This is because snoring manifests difficulty in breathing. That is why the vibration that happens inside the throat area is being induced whenever something is blocking the area.

Sleep apnea is a life-threatening sleeping disorder that manifests any interruptions or pauses in between breaths. It is so alarming because a person who is sleeping and suffering from sleep apnea usually stops breathing for several seconds usually up to a minute long and resumes breathing thereafter.

Indeed, these symptoms may seem too common for people to understand that they are the main factors that indicate the sleeping disorder.

But now that these items are known, the best thing to do is to assess them if they experience these problems. As soon as they are able to identify if they have these problems, it is best to have their conditions diagnosed by a doctor immediately so as to obtain necessary measures.

Sleeping Disorders #1 - Night Eating Syndrome

Eating while sleeping? It's probably a disorder

Has this happened to you?

You woke up one morning, and you found that there were wrappers of candy bar all over your kitchen. Incidentally, your stomach aches and you see that you had chocolate smudges all over your hands and face. Your parents or your husband tells you that you are up all night long eating, but surprisingly, you don't recall that you did so. Your parents or your husband seemed serious telling you that you actually ate all those chocolates. Is there an inside joke?

Probably not. In fact, the symptoms show that you probably have a night eating syndrome.

Night eating syndrome, also known as sleep-related eating, is considered by medical doctors as a parasomnia. It is not a frequent sleepwalking type. People suffering from this disorder have experiences of recurrent eating episodes while asleep, without actually being aware that they are actually doing it. This nocturnal eating syndrome might happen most of the time that it would show significant gain in your weight. Although this disorder can affect people in all ages and sexes, the sleep-related eating affects young women more than men.

What is night eating disorder?

Also known as nocturnal sleep-related eating disorder or NS-RED, night eating disorder is not an eating problem strictly speaking. It is known as a sleep disorder type that enables people to eat while seemingly asleep. While sleeping, they could eat while in bed, or in some cases, roaming around the house or staying at the kitchen.

The people suffering from this disorder are not conscious during NS-RED episodes. That is why night eating disorder is always related to sleep-walking. Being asleep, they do not know that they eat and cannot recall any incident of eating the night

before. If at all, they can only remember in fragments. The NS-RED episode more or less occurs somewhere in a state between sleep and wakefulness.

When people suffering from night eating disorder learn that they have such a problem, they feel ashamed and embarrassed. Some, even with evidence presented by his or her family members, deny that they did that. They cannot believe that they could do such a thing and cannot admit to themselves that they could not control themselves.

The food consumed during the disorder periods are most likely to be high-sugar, high-fat food that people usually avoid when they're awake. In some cases, there are those who eat bizarre food combinations, such as raw bacon partnered with mayonnaise, or hotdogs being dipped in a peanut butter. Some even eat non-food items such as soap in the same way they slice cheese.

How can you get NS-RED?

According to recent statistics, about three to nine people or about one to three percent of the total population are most likely to be affected by the disorder, with up to 15 percent of those who have eating disorders affected by night eating disorder.

Many of those affected by the syndrome diet (or at least try to) during the day, leaving them hungry and very weak to binge eating during the night when their control to achieve weight loss gets weakened by sleep. Some people have medical histories of drug abuse, alcoholism, and other sleep disorders such as restless legs, sleep apnea, and sleep walking. They often get tired upon waking up due to fragmented sleep. Many NS-RED cases seem to run along family lines.

How can you eat and unable to remember doing so?

Actually, that could really happen. While research on this disorder is still not that comprehensive, there is a high probability that there are parts of the brain that are truly sleeping even though some parts stay wide awake. Also asleep are the parts that regulate your waking consciousness, so it is no wonder that you cannot remember any memories of gorging on food on the night before.

Is NS-RED curable? What should you do if you have it?

Thank god, treatment is available for your night eating disorder. Treatment starts with a medical interview as well as spending a night or two in a good sleep-disorders center where your brain activity can be monitored. Medication is sometimes helpful, but you should avoid taking sleeping pills as they can aggravate your sleep disorder by adding to the clumsiness and confusion upon waking up and may cause you injury as can regular use of these pills.

Yes, there is treatment. It begins with a clinical interview and a night or two at a sleep-disorders center where brain activity is monitored. Sometimes medication is helpful, but sleeping pills should be avoided. They can make matters worse by increasing confusion and clumsiness that can lead to injury. Regular use of sleeping pills can also lead you to dependency. It would be better that you ask a doctor on what medication to take.

Sleeping Disorders #2 - Restless Legs Syndrome

Do you experience painful leg muscles and an abnormally uncontrollable desire to move around just to partially relieve the pain? Beware of those symptoms for it could be a sign of a more serious illness.

The following section you are about to read diligently tackles the common misconceptions facts about the restless legs syndrome and properly identify the symptoms characterizing such disease and how you can empower yourself and people suffering from them.

Facts and Symptoms

Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) is a type of neurological sickness which is characterized by painful leg muscles which continues unless they are drawn into physical action.

These distinctive symptoms are in some ways suggestive of motor and sensory malfunction in which uncontrollable urge to move is more prominent.

That means, as leg musculature are relaxed, the more frequent the occurrence of symptoms are. People with this disease feel an abnormally unpleasant feeling of muscle dragging which reduces in severity as the legs are physically maneuvered as in the case of walking or jogging.

It afflicts people of all ages and both genders. Given the current statistics, females and older individuals are apt to develop the symptoms.

Causes

Restless Legs Syndrome is of idiopathic type; meaning its exact cause and origin is not yet known. Currently, scientists are working on locating the part of the brain, which triggers the condition, and genetically identifying the gene which transmits such trait to other cells and other physiological and nutritional factors which activates the episodes of pain in the leg and foot region.

The conditions peculiar to this disease usually occur when the legs are in the resting state. Idleness triggers the symptoms by which this disease is known and manifests patients suffering from this ailment. Burning and creeping sensations are just some of the most common feeling. Collating all the symptoms, we can identify them as follows:

1. The desire to move the legs due to uncomfortable pain
2. Pain becoming more pronounced and advancing at night

3. Involuntary movement of the legs during sleep

4. Onset of symptoms occurs during periods of inactivity and relieved once the legs are moved

The disease affects a considerable number of people worldwide. In fact, according to the latest Restless Legs Syndrome Foundation studies, more than 8% of the US population may be harboring this neurological condition. This can be translated to more than 12 million people currently diagnosed and exhibiting such remarkable conditions.

Due to the commonality of symptoms and their apparent similarity to other diseases, RLS patients are more often than not misdiagnosed which in turn result to unsuccessful medical treatment.

Much to the patient's dismay is that, little attention and funding is dispensed on this type of disease suggesting the slow progress to unveiling the mystery of restless legs syndrome and helping patients suffering on it.

Treatment

Perhaps, one reason for unsuccessful treatment is due to patient's attitude over the symptoms. Typical indications of the disease are ignored due to the symptoms unpredictable pattern of attack sometimes occurring during wakefulness or at night or in the middle of the sleep.

Symptoms usually last for days or weeks or usually progress to weeks and disappear for weeks or months. Pain eventually reappears with less intensity after a day or weeks and even for months.

These apparent incalculable occurrences of symptoms make treatment difficult to reconcile. More so, the disease may progress due to the inappropriate treatment applied as the symptoms are ignored.

Since causes remain unidentified, medical treatments are yet to be discovered. A couple of treatment is to relieve the symptoms and not specifically cure them.

Additional Findings

Restless sleep syndrome is usually confused with Periodic Limb Movement in Sleep Disorder (PLMD). Individuals affected by this disorder are identified with the same type of symptoms as in the case of RLS patients but the main difference is that, as the name suggest, it occurs only while asleep and is usually the main cause of insomnia in patients with sleep disorder.

Kicking, flailing primarily of the legs and arms are just some of the most common stereotypical movements. While most RLS patients have PLMD, not all PLMD symptoms develop to RLS.

Genetics

There has been mounting evidence that RLS may be inherited. In a study conducted on 2001, 14 RLS patients among those 25 French-Canadian individuals apparently suggest the autosomal recessive mode of transmission of RLS.

In autosomal recessive type of inheritance, 2 copies of gene that codes for the disease should be present in order for the effects to materialize in a living species.

Now what does this mean to us? This implies that the chances of developing the disease are enhanced when either your parents have a family history of the disorder or both of them somehow exhibited the condition or are carriers of the condition.

Conclusions

If you experience any of the conditions above, it is best to seek the medical help of your physician so that proper treatment and guidance will be patterned should the disease was identified as RLS. Early detection and treatment is necessary early treatment and to lessen at the very least, the symptoms associated with the disease.

Sleeping Disorders #3 - Circadian Rhythms Syndrome

Sleep forms part of human's biological need to rest. As a person sleeps, the various physiological processes of a human body figuratively put into an apparent arrest and some parts of our system that were mostly exploited can be replenished for future use.

However, imagine a system so disrupted that our normal scheduling for sleeping and waking is totally altered. Some people tend to sleep early and wake up early in the morning and some cannot sleep early and as a consequence, wakes up late.

These and other sleep-related problems are manifestations of a malfunctioning biological circadian clock and characterize several forms of Circadian Rhythm Syndrome. Circadian activity is a unique by 24-hour period or cycles in which our body is physically patterned.

24-hour vs. 25-hour cycle

Earth rotates around the sun in a 24-hour cycle, so as our body functions in this 24-hour time schedule. All living organisms charismatically subscribe to this cyclic resting and activity patterns so that their body could function in sync with the environment in which they live.

Although humans externally operate under a 24-hour environment, research found that our body clocks evidently works significantly different than what we see in the environment.

It shows that the human body closely behaves as if it were under a 25-hour environment. Convincingly, humans' reluctance to wake up at a required time and sleeping late at night probably explains this theory.

To compensate for this discrepancy, the body uses time "cues" to effectively counter-manage this asynchronous rhythmical. Setting an alarm helps us wake up at a designated time of the day and allows us to function as if it were under the 24-hour rhythmic schedule.

Dark vs. Light

Light and temperature provides the determining factor by which the body responds to the 24-hour activity period. The presence or absence of light primarily affects the part of the brain which paces your bodily activities.

It was believed that the fundamental locus or location of our biological clock is the brain specifically in the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN) of the hypothalamus.

In complex animals like humans, hypothalamus forms part of the autonomous nervous system which in part, controls the functions of organs that are not voluntarily controlled, hence involuntary. Involuntary, meaning, they are not governed by conscious will to act. These include breathing, heart beat and intestinal digestion.

Eyes, Light and SCN

One interesting point to make is that the location of SCN is just above the optic chiasma (cross). Optic chiasma can be described as a location where optic nerve fibers meet and cross (chiasma-cross).

It is fitting to say that, the perception of light through the opening in the eyes, triggers the wake/sleep patterns in humans since this is one way the organism receives such physical message.

As retina (a portion of the eye where initial image of an object is stored) traps light rays, optic fibers relay the image to the brain via characteristic electrical pulses.

This unique sensory impulse is carried along the optic fibers to the occipital lobe (rear part) of the brain and is perceived as images. The proximity of the optic

chiasma to the SCN perhaps provides the opportunity for the hypothalamus to “sense” the referred electrical impulses.

Forms of Circadian Rhythms Syndrome/Disorders

Circadian Rhythm defects can come many distinct forms depending on the amount and timing of waking up and sleeping. Others, as in the case of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), result in the changes in the length of day and night.

People who tend to sleep at a later time of the day and wake up late as well are said to be exhibiting Delayed Sleep Phase Syndrome (DSPS). These people tend to develop insomnia, an abnormal inability to take adequate amount of sleep due to not being able to sleep at the right time of the night.

Still, other people, especially the elderly, are more likely to sleep early around 7:00 PM and consequently wake up early around 1:00 AM or 2:00 AM. This is a symptom of disrupted natural biological rhythms known as Familial Advanced Sleep-Phase Syndrome (FASPS).

The amount of a substance called melatonin is also perceived as a motivating factor in sleep-related disorders in humans. In a study among vertebrate mammals, melatonin is secreted in response to the absence of light.

This means more melatonin is secreted in the period of darkness and less in the presence of light. It presupposes the idea that melatonin is related to the 24-hour sleep/wake cycle of every human being.

Genetics

A considerable research has been made with the objective of locating the gene responsible for the emergence of these disorders. One research study published in Science on January 12, 2001, a monthly scientific journal, shows that the Familial Advanced Sleep-Phase Syndrome was a result of an apparent mutation of hPer2 gene.

But much has to be known about the function of the normal form of this gene and its adverse effect in mutated forms while considering its relation to other sleep-related illnesses.

Recommendations

With the knowledge gained in the preceding discussion, it can be assumed that the presence and absence of light affects our sleeping/waking schedule. With these in mind, keep yourself committed to your schedule to rest and sleep and set aside things which are not really important.

Keep your room as dark and gloomy as possible, to make it easy for you to sleep. Colorful objects stimulate your senses and disrupt sleep. Keep it ventilated and air-conditioned.

Studies show that as we sleep, our body temperature drops and allows the neurotransmitter melatonin to be produced at a rapid pace.

Keep those things in mind and do not forget to seek medical help should your condition progresses.

Sleeping Disorders #4 - Conditioned Insomnia

Several reports show that people who do not get enough sleep have the tendency to be sluggish, weak, sickly, and passive. This goes to show that people who are deprived from restful sleep are greatly affected in term of their work performance and the way they communicate and interact with other people. There are cases wherein people who are usually unable to sleep well tend to be irritable and unproductive.

Health experts contend that the classification and the intensity of the condition of the person being deprived from a good night's sleep determine the kind of problem that he or she has. In fact, they even insist that these symptoms of sleeping disorders are indicative of life-threatening conditions that other people just take for granted.

Hence, it is extremely important for physicians and other health experts to identify these problems immediately so as to avoid harnessing further problems that may lead to death.

Surveys show that almost 30 million Americans are said to be suffering from persistent sleeping disorder, while others are said to have episodic or momentary sleeping problems.

Furthermore, reports assert that 2% to 4% of the adult population are currently suffering from a sleeping disorder known as sleep apnea. On the other hand, 5-10% of the whole populace is experiencing chronic insomnia. The rest of the percentage of the population suffer from other forms of sleeping disorders such as periodic limb movement disorder, narcolepsy, restless leg syndrome, etc.

Among the different sleeping disorders, insomnia is being considered deadly serious by almost all of the people who suffer from sleeping disorders. This is because insomnia triggers the individual to doze off to sleep unexpectedly during the day due to lack of sleep they had during the night.

Insomnia is generally characterized by inadequate amount of sleep brought about by a wide range of factors such as waking up more often during sleep at night, difficulty in falling asleep and falling back to sleep, restless sleep, and waking up too early in the morning considering the fact that the person had only slept for a few hours only, say, two or three hours.

Basically, insomnia occurs to people who have been ill for quite sometime, those who came from travel, changes in the environment, jet lag, stress from recent work-related problems, psychological problems, etc.

These conditions manifest what most people know as sporadic or transient insomnia. This type of insomnia usually last for a short period of time only and will soon be eradicated.

However, there are instances wherein people suffer more than just what transient insomnia indicates. Here, chronic insomnia is said to be causing more dangerous cases of insomnia.

Chronic Insomnia

The term chronic simply means unceasing, therefore, when experts tell people they have chronic insomnia, this means that the kind of insomnia that they experience are more constant compared to the transient insomnia.

Generally, people who have chronic insomnia suffer from difficulty of falling asleep that have the tendency to become so weakening that other signs of different illness follow.

Failure to treat this kind of insomnia will result to what health experts define as conditioned insomnia or those that is constant in its occurrence. This type of insomnia has symptoms that will last for longer period of time, usually from 6 months to a year or even longer.

Conditioned insomnia is characterized by a persistent and worsening condition of the person suffering from the basic conditions of insomnia.

It may pose dilemma to people who experience it but the problem does not lie on the conditions it manifests but on the inability of the person to identify the underlying cause of the problem. That is why it is extremely important to know what insomnia is all about and what causes such condition.

The Truth about Insomnia

Contrary to most popular beliefs, insomnia is neither a disease nor a malady. It is simply a symptom of an underlying problem that needs to be treated first so as to cure insomnia. Some of the causes of insomnia are psychological problems such as stress and depression, poor sleeping hygiene, emotional problems, medications, physical disorders, etc.

Statistics show that insomnia is more prevalent in old people where the sleeping pattern changes. This is because older people sleep most during the day as they would in the night.

In turn, they find it really difficult to sleep during the night. Usually, manifestations of insomnia are also good indicators of another problem—the Alzheimer's disease.

Generally, people who experience conditioned insomnia often experiences irritability, fatigue, and have problems in getting their work done that usually results to stress.

So, the best solution to this problem is to identify the cause of insomnia so as to cure the problem all throughout.

Normally, the treatment includes bright light therapy that help reset the human's biological clock, hypnotics, certain medications that contains antihistamines, and melatonin or drugs that aids in minimizing jet lags.

Indeed, there are no hard or fast rules in treating insomnia. However, the only best way to treat the problem is to know the cause. After which, the individual can soon start sleeping normally and peacefully.

Sleeping Disorders #5 - Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a health condition far more serious than what most would think of. Sleep apnea is a health condition that happens when one's breathing during sleep stop for a while, usually 10 seconds or even longer. Sleep apnea could happen 5 to 45 times per hour.

Sleep apnea is usually associated with choking sensations and often leads to headaches and sleepiness during the day. Its moderateness or severity is measured with respect to the frequency of episodes per hour, whether you have no breathing (apnea) or slower breathing (hyponea).

Sleep apnea occurs mostly but not limited to men and not specific to any age group. Loud snoring is usually associated with apnea. People with high blood pressure and obese are most likely to developed sleep apnea. Problems in the nose, throat, and air passageway can also cause sleep apnea. Early detection of sleep apnea is very important since it is usually implies an underlying health conditions such as heart problems.

In some cases, apnea happen when the muscles in the throat & tongue relax when one is sleeping, which eventually lead to blockage of the air passageway to some varying degree. Then breathing becomes noisier, slow, or even stop for a while. Obese people have great possibilities of having sleep apnea since they have more tissue in the airway that makes it narrow for normal breathing.

Sleep apnea makes an active person feel sleepy in the morning and affects their concentration in work. Severe sleep apnea could lead to depression, memory loses, irritability, and other negative socio-psychological conditions. Sleep apnea could increase the risk of having a heart attack, high blood pressure and even stroke. One should suspect having a sleep apnea disorder when the following conditions occur:

1. Heavy snoring during sleep while struggling to breath. This is usually monitored by the spouse or room mate.

2. Co-workers noticing one's lack of concentration at work and falling to sleep frequently.
3. Headaches upon waking up from sleep.
4. Frequent urination at night.
5. Heartburn during the night.
6. Frequent changing in sleep position restlessly.
7. Night time choking episodes.

Detecting sleep apnea is a collaborative effort among your family physician, neurologist, and pulmonologist. Among the tests for diagnosing person with such disorder are Polysommography and The Multiple Sleep Latency Test (MSLT).

Polysomnography monitors different functions of the body during sleep such as brain activity, movement of the eye, movement of the muscles, heart beating, blood oxygen. The test will also determine whether the condition is moderate or severe.

The Multiple Sleep Latency Test (MSLT) measures how fast the individual fall into sleep. Normal people fall into sleep in 10 to 20 minutes on the average while people with sleep apnea disorder fall into sleep in 5 minutes or less. Additionally, MSLT is use to measure the daytime sleepiness of the person.

Types of treatments for sleep apnea;

1. Behavioral Therapy. Is usually all that is needed for a mild case. It changes the person behavior towards the use of alcohol, tobacco which affects the airway. For an

obese person, the therapy also includes weight loss program. Overweight persons can benefit from losing weight. Even a small amount of weight loss will lower the frequency of apnea in majority of patients.

2. Physical or Mechanical Therapy. Here is one of the most effective ways of treating sleep apnea. During the therapy, the patient wears a mask on his nose during sleep while applying air pressure to the nasal passages. The therapy provides air pressure to keep the airway from narrowing.

3. Surgery for adults. Surgery is considered only when other alternative therapy failed or if the patient volunteered to. Surgery aims to remove unnecessary tissue build-up in the throat to open up the airway.

The best cure to sleep apnea is prevention. There are several ways to prevent one from having to develop sleep apnea and reduce the frequency of the attacks:

1. Many Sleep apnea patients are obese. Maintaining a healthy weight is a sure way to prevent the frequency of apnea episodes since it increases the volume of oxygen in the blood. Studies showed that a 10 percent decrease in weight would reduce the frequency of apnea episodes up to 26 percent.

2. Avoid or at least limit alcohol intake.

3. Avoid or limit the use of tranquilizers, sleeping pills.

4. Have time for enough sleep. Lack of sleep increase the frequency of apnea attacks.

5. Treat allergies and runny nose promptly.

6. Avoid sleeping on your back.

Sleep apnea is a serious disease. It could be just a symptom of other more serious illness such as hypertension and heart disease. Should you suspect having the symptoms, take time to visit your family physician. Early detection and diagnoses of sleep apnea could save your life.

Who Gets Sleep Apnea?

Sleep Apnea: How dangerous is it?

Before reading through the rest of this chapter, please answer the following questions:

- Do you regularly snore a lot? Is your snoring so loud that you or someone is awakened by it?

- Does it ever happen to you that you wake up abruptly, often choking or gasping for air?

- At daytime, do you feel extremely sleepy? Even if you're doing something, do you have a hard time staying awake to finish it?

- Do you have dry mouth, headaches, sore throat once you wake up in the morning?

If you answer YES to all these questions, then you probably have the sleep disorder apnea.

Sleep apnea is a deadly sleep disorder that gets worse as you grow older. Not only is sleep apnea causes you sleep deprivation, but worse, it can pose danger to your life.

Anyone can have sleep apnea. According to recent statistics, at least 12 million American suffer from sleep apnea. Majority of those suffering from sleep apnea are overweight and heavily snorers.

What are the symptoms of sleep apnea? These are:

- Snoring loudly and regularly;
- Are overweight;
- Suffering from high-blood pressure;
- Have small airways sized in the nose, mouth, and throat; and
- Has at least one from your family that have been suffering or suffered from apnea.

This sleep disorder affects more men than women. Out of 25 middle-aged guys, one suffers from sleep apnea while only one out of 50 women suffers from it.

Based on statistics, sleep apnea occurs more commonly in Americans of African descent, Hispanics, and those living in the Pacific Islands. If your family has a sleep apnea case, then it is highly probable that you would get one too.

Sleep apnea also occurs with children, with its most common symptom as snoring.

What are the common sleep apnea symptoms?

- Loud snoring
- Gasping or choking for air during sleep
- Drowsiness and extreme desire to sleep at day time, even while you're at work or driving

Others signs may include:

- Morning headaches
- Learning or memory problems
- Feeling irritable
- Inability to concentrate
- Mood swings or changes in personality
- Dry throat upon waking up
- At night, frequent urination

How could you diagnose if you have sleep apnea?

These are some ways to help specialists know if you have sleep apnea.

- Checking your medical history, including asking you, your family, and officemates on how you sleep and how you work at day
- Examining if you have large or extra tissues in your mouth, throat, or nose.
- Recording your sleep to check your breathing pattern.

How could you be treated for sleep apnea?

The goal in treating your sleep apnea is to restore back your regular breathing during the night and solving symptoms such as loud snoring and sleepiness during the day.

If you suffer from a mild case, some changes in your daily habits or activities could lead to the treatment.

- Stay away from alcoholic beverages, sleep-inducing medications, and smoking.
- Try to shed off some pounds if your weight borders on the plus side.
- Instead of sleeping on your back, try sleeping sideways.

People who have cases that are severe or even moderate should try these treatments:

- Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP)

The most frequent treatment for moderate and severe sleep apnea cases, CPAP allows you to have the right amount of airway pressure in your mouth to keep the throat open as you sleep.

If not used correctly or abruptly stopped, your disorder will come back.

Ask your doctor for any possible effects from using CPAP.

- Mouthpiece

A mouthpiece or an oral appliance may prove to be useful to those who have mild cases of sleep apnea.

A customized mouthpiece will keep your throat airways open as you sleep. Just check with your orthodontist or dentists if you might suffer from side effects. Make sure that the mouthpiece fits.

- Surgery

In some cases, surgery is the ultimate solution. You just have to consult with your doctor the nature of the surgery and if there are possible health repercussions after you have completed the surgery.

At present, there aren't any medications yet that could treat sleep apnea. But this should not sadden you. With the help of medical specialists, solving your sleep apnea could be attainable.

How Sleep Apnea Manifests Insomnia

The clinical definition of a sleeping disorder is a disruptive pattern of sleep that may include difficulty in falling or staying asleep, falling asleep at inappropriate times, excessive total sleep time, or abnormal behaviors associated with sleep.

There are four basic categories that each sleeping disorder can be put into: insomnia, hypersomnia, sleep disruptive disorders, and basic trouble with adhering to a normal sleep pattern. Some symptoms of having a sleeping disorder are: difficulty in falling asleep, daytime drowsiness, loud snoring, fatigue, depression, anxiety and lower leg movements during sleep.

Sleep apnea is a common disorder in which a person's breathing stops during sleep for 10 seconds or more, sometimes more than 300 times a night.

There are two main types of sleep apnea. The first is Obstructive Sleep Apnea which may represent the stoppage of breathing due to a mechanical blockage of the airway. The second is Central Sleep Apnea which appears to be related to a malfunction of the brain's normal signal to breathe.

Some of the symptoms of sleep apnea may include restless sleep, loud and heavy snoring which is often interrupted by silence and then gasps, falling asleep while driving or when the person is at work or at home while watching TV, morning headaches, loss of energy, trouble concentrating, and mood or behavioral changes.

Snoring is usually associated with apnea. Snoring is defined as noisy breathing one occurs during sleep when the flow of air through the airways is blocked or when the airways vibrate during breathing.

Several factors tend to make people snore: nasal congestion, being overweight, smoking, drinking alcohol before bedtime, and sleeping on your back. Sleeping pills, painkillers and other drugs that cause drowsiness can also make snoring more likely.

Because a person is not able to sleep well or not get good nights sleep, some doctors are now conducting research to see how Apnea manifests insomnia since both interferes with the daytime functioning of a person. Some causes which still have to be confirmed are the certain medicines available in the market to treat such disorder; medical conditions, excess stress, or poor sleep habits can all affect the quality of your sleep.

To check if a person has a sleeping disorder, a diagnosis is made by a physician specially trained in sleep medicine. After a physical examination of the upper airway and an interview with lots of questions, if the tests have determined that the patient has a sleeping disorder, one will have to undergo a polysomnogram (sleep test). Most sleep centers and labs monitor 16 different sleep parameters including EEG, EKG, eye movement, chin movement, air flow, chest effort, abdomen effort, SaO₂, snoring and leg movement. Each parameter serves to help the physician make a correct diagnosis.

Tests are conducted in a sleep room much like a motel room. A technician will paste electrodes at certain points on your head, face, body and legs. Those electrodes will be hooked to monitoring equipment that will record the entire night study. Most patients do not experience anxiety or difficulty in going to sleep. The patients in most cases are extremely sleepy and will be asleep in just a few minutes.

Once a correct diagnosis has been made, the doctor may recommend a variety of treatments available for those that suffer from sleep apnea, including medications, behavioral therapy, and, in extreme cases, surgery.

Although over-the-counter sleep aids may be helpful it is not advisable to use these products on a regular basis. These sleep aids don't eliminate the problem but only provide temporary relief and may become less effective after a few days of use.

Doctors however often recommend a prescription device called a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) device for patients with sleep apnea. During sleep, the patient wears a mask that fits over the nose. The mask is attached to an air compressor adjusted to blow enough air through the nose to keep the airway open. If a CPAP device doesn't help, then surgery on the upper airway may be the last resort.

By developing good sleeping habits, one may be able to break the pattern of sleeplessness without needing other therapies. Good habits include going to bed and waking up at a regular time, eliminating naps, and avoiding stimulation from exercise or caffeine shortly before bedtime. Relaxation techniques and changes in diet can also help some people.

Insomnia in Infants and Children

Silent Night: Treating Insomnia in Infants and Children

There are some people who have problems falling asleep each and every night. If they do, chances are they are afflicted by a psychological sleeping disorder called insomnia. Usually, people suffering from insomnia blame this for too much stress, worries, depression and a very worrisome life.

People mostly believe that these feelings cannot be experienced by infants and children because they are too young to worry about anything. Based on this reasoning, some people think that insomnia would not occur in children. But this is not true. Just like adults, insomnia can also happen to children and infants.

Children have different sleeping habits and time patterns. For infants who are one week old, the average length of sleep per day is 16 hours. There are parents that believe that babies who sleep less are geniuses or have a high I.Q. But there is no scientific evidence to support this belief. Babies usually wake once every evening at the minimum. Unless breast fed, infants can go back to sleep on their own.

Insomnia or sleeping disorders can be defined in the following parameters:

- Having a hard time to sleep at night
- A person who wakes up very early
- A person who wakes up often at night

This ailment can cause the feeling of tiredness and drowsiness even after waking up in the morning. A person with insomnia also has a hard time concentrating.

Other terms for insomnia are Wakefulness, Sleeplessness and Dysomnia.

Infants usually wake up frequently at night. At the sixth month, babies basically have a normalized nocturnal pattern by being asleep the whole night. When the infant reaches a year old, he or she sleeps at a rate of 16 hours per 24 hours. The baby will sleep during daytime from 2 to 3 hours.

Reasons why babies suffer from insomnia:

- They want their parents to notice them
- They may be suffering from digestive ailments or infantile colic which is a condition where babies cry for more than 3 hours a day.
- Infants that are often hungry
- Their teeth are beginning to grow
- They may be ill or afflicted by a disease

Here are some tips in curing insomnia for infants:

- Try not to comfort the baby immediately when crying at night. It would be best to wait until the infant stops crying on his or her own. Constant attention can be a stimulus for infants to stay awake at night.
- Observe if the child is unable to sleep because of excessive noise. Try playing classical or slow songs to cover up noisy environment.
- Do not make a child go to bed as a penalty or reprimand for something. This can cause insomnia because instead of them enjoying being asleep, they dread it.
- Parents should not make an infant accustomed to falling asleep in their arms. When the baby is already six months old, try making them used to fall asleep on their cribs by themselves.
- Reading stories in bed, tapping or scratching a child before sleeping, singing a lullaby is often a cause of insomnia because without these routines children will be unable to sleep.
- Do not give a child sleep inducing medicine unless the doctor advises it. As much as possible, do not use chemicals or drugs in curing insomnia.
- Remember that sleeping pills may have side effects.
- If the condition remains after trying home measures to cure insomnia, consult a doctor.

To cure infant insomnia, parents should be ready to let their baby cry without comfort until they learn to sleep by themselves. They can also try to slowly lessen the attention that they give each night to put an infant to sleep until they can totally do it without parent's supervision.

Children especially infants need enough and regular sleep for them to grow healthy emotionally and physically. Parents should be very sensitive and vigilant in observing their child's sleeping habit. Eventually both the parents and the child will be affected by insomnia if this is not given attention. The bedroom should be a place to sleep and should be peaceful not rowdy. A bedroom is not a room for a child's play but for a child's restful evening.

Finally, sleeplessness is a sign of a mind not at peace. A child is always an angel and an angel should always be at peace. Making your baby grow like an angel is not easy and most of the time it takes sacrifices. In time, parents can sleep soundly at night because their child grew up to be a good person; all because they made their child sleep right since birth.

Treating Insomnia - Do OTC Meds Work?

"Treating Insomnia: Is having sweet dreams just a dream?"

A person who is suffering from sleepless nights, someone who frequently wakes up at night and rises up early in the morning even though that person does not have enough sleep is having a sleeping disorder known as insomnia.

Insomnia is a condition in which a person is not getting enough sleep. This person when awakened at night has a hard time sleeping again. Insomnia can happen every night, from time to time or in a period of time.

Here are the some suggestions wherein insomnia can be treated:

1. Follow a positive routine.

If an insomniac has an erratic eating routine, this should be changed to a fixed routine dedicated to directly fight insomnia. The person should eat early dinner so as to condition the body to sleep early.

2. Do not drink coffee.

As much as possible, a person with insomnia should avoid drinking coffee, sodas, chocolate, cocoa, green tea, black tea or anything that has caffeine. Caffeine is a stimulant that triggers sleeplessness. It can make someone awake for as long as 20 hours. For some, even drinking a cup of coffee in the morning causes them sleeplessness at night.

3. Exercise at night.

Insomnia is often caused by too much stress. Doing exercise at night makes blood to circulate in our brain and body. This in turn makes us calm and stress free.

4. The bedroom should be conducive to sleep.

Loud noise coming from cars in the street, upbeat music set at very high volume, bright lights and uncomfortable bed should be avoided.

5. Read not watch.

Read books, magazines or anything that interests an insomniac instead of watching television. Television enhances attention which makes a person awake. Reading on the other hand while in bed causes the eye to get tired and creates a sleepy feeling.

6. Relax

Try ways that causes our body to relax. Meditation technique like yoga can initiate a calm state of mind and body. Listening to soft and classical music can also help. There are fragrant oils, incense, and candles that are made specifically to aid in relaxation. Consult a shop that sells these on type of scents that can induce sleep.

7. The root solution for insomnia.

There are root extracts that can engender a sleepy state. 300 to 600 mg of concentrated extract should be taken 30 minutes prior to going to bed. This root extract can be mixed with calming herbs like chamomile, passion flower and balm made from lemon.

8. Take melatonin with caution

Melatonin can help in adjusting one's sleeping pattern. 0.5 to 3.0 mg an hour or two before going to bed may help. Melatonin though should only be taken with the approval of a physician. The human body has different reactions to melatonin.

As people grow older, the melatonin level of the body decreases. This explains why older people usually have a hard time sleeping and sleep less compared to children and younger people.

9. Magnesium

Conditions such as restless legs syndrome (RLS) and period limb movements (PLM) while sleeping can cause insomnia. Taking 300 mg of magnesium at night from four to six weeks can solve insomnia. Again this should be done with doctor's consent.

10. Acupuncture

Acupuncture which is a Chinese healing method could help to heal insomnia. These needles put into the skin strike nerve transmitters that produce sleep inducing hormones like serotonin.

Natural methods in curing insomnia are always preferred but upon a doctor's approval the following over the counter medicines are formulated to stimulate sleep.

- Diphenhydramine (Excedrin, Nytol, Somnex)
- Doxylamine (Unisom)

The following on the other hand are medications that need to have doctor's prescription to avail:

- Zolpidem (Ambien)
- Zaleplon (Sonata)
- Flurazepam (Dalmane)

- Estazolam (ProSom)
- Temazepam (Restori)
- Triazolam (Halcion)

Although these medicines are chemicals that trigger sleep, long periods of usage lessens its effectiveness.

Altering a person's diet is effective in preventing and healing insomnia. Doctors suggest eating food that is high in carbohydrate prior to sleep. Examples of these are bread and crackers. Studies showed that carbohydrates enhance the quantity of serotonin produced by the body. Serotonin is a chemical messenger or neurotransmitter that affects the brain. This chemical lessens anxiety which in turn creates sleep.

Consulting a psychologist or psychiatrist may give light in solving insomnia. This sleeping disorder is usually caused by stress. A psychologist or psychiatrist can give expert advice on how to treat insomnia.

There are natural methods, practices, over the counter medicines and prescribed medicines that can be the solution to insomnia. It would be best to consult a doctor on this disorder for sound guidance towards a sound sleep.

Curing Insomnia with Behavior Modification

Drinking 2 cups of coffee translates to 2 hours of tossing and turning in bed. While the preceding sentence is not categorically accurate, it's a fact that most of our behaviors effectively disrupts our sleep patterns and the length of time we can enjoy those restful hours of our life.

It was found that the quality of your sleep tells much about your state of mind and overall health. This is perfectly verified in individuals who were deprived of sleep. They find it hard to concentrate; they get sick and are always irritated.

Before we discuss how lifestyle changes can restore those treasured restful sleep, let us first find out the basic facts about sleeping and how it can help us to be a better individual every time we wake up!

Exactly how much sleep do you need in a day?

The amount of sleep a person needs actually depends on the age and amount of physical and mental activity a person engages to. For example, an infant who does not perform any strenuous task and undergoing a period of rapid growth needs 16 to 18 hours of sleep.

The same thing applies to teenagers who are experiencing the biological challenges of puberty. More often than not they require at least 9 hours of sleep every night for that matter.

Adults, on the other hand, requires 7 to 8 hours of sleep a day but changes if one engages to a vigorous activity which requires too much bodily strength. From this figures alone, we can see that sleep requirement varies from person to person.

Moreover, older individuals in their 60s above usually sleep a bit shorter due to some physical factors researchers are trying to find out. One study even shows as the body grows older the amount of melatonin, the chemical which induces sleep, a body produces diminishes and becomes irregular.

It doesn't take to be a rocket scientist to understand the benefits of sleeping. But in some ways, to practically appreciate the benefits of a thing, we sometimes need to experience the consequences it creates when it's omitted.

Consequences of Sleep Deprivation

There are just tons of things to see about people who don't get to have enough of restful sleep. Some of them are outlined below:

- Reduced mental coordination
- Poor concentration and memory lapses
- Apparent loss of appetite
- Dulling skin
- Impaired immune response
- Depression
- Unexplainable onset of anxiety
- Digestion and bowel problems

Stop counting those sheep!

Sleepless night is just something that scares most busy people. It affects our professional commitments and for some parents, affects their relationship with their children and husband or wife. Worst, it carries the potential to destroy our social interests little by little.

Before we get to complain the toll of busy life let us first analyze the various behaviors affecting our sleeping habits.

Too much of this and that – Too much of everything is always bad said the old cliché. Too much workload and heavy eating sometimes lead to wakefulness because your body is working hard digesting them.

Try cutting those fats and carbs and consume just the right amount of them and see the difference it does to your sleeping program.

Coffee Please! – Throw those coffee makers away – at least before sleeping. :) Refrain from drinking coffee and other carbonated products such as colas 3 hours before you sleep.

Caffeine contained in these products induces you to remain awake even for hours. Stomach gases produced by acids in carbonated drinks causes periodic episodes of wakefulness during sleep.

Stay calm – Give your muscles a chance to rest. It pays. Rigorous physical stress like jogging, lifting weights and other types of exercises wakes you up and disrupts your sleeping schedule.

It worth mentioning that regular exercise is critical to restful sleep, however, it should be noted that this must be done with utmost consideration to your sleeping time program. Exercising before sleeping keeps you awake for hours.

Bed equals sleep – Doing other activities in bed other than sleeping and sex is one way of ruining that chance to rest. Accomplish work-related task in a designated area and allow your body to identify bed as a place to relax.

Keep up with the schedule – Remember to commit yourself in the usual schedule you are supposed to sleep. Your body keeps its own “biological clock” or circadian rhythm and routinely checks if you are keeping up with your daily obligation!

Eat right! – The types of food you eat greatly affect how you sleep. There are foods which contribute to helping you sleep, called “sleepers” and foods termed “wakers”, which stimulate the body to move.

Dairy products, grains, soy products, eggs and rice are examples of sleepers. They contain amino acid tryptophan which relaxes your nerves. It’s like reducing the commotion happening on those little cells of yours and helps them cast off their tensions.

On the other hand, “wakers” are foods such as those loaded with proteins such as pork and caffeinated food commodities such as chocolates, coffee, colas, and tea. These foods contain a great amount of amino acid tyrosine which revs up the activity of your brain.

Knowledge in nutrition empowers you to choose the right kind of food for a specific type of activity and maintains an active but healthy life.