

## Importance of Sleep

Adopt a regular sleeping pattern so you get 7 &ndash; 8 hours a night for optimal health and well-being. Sleeping helps to restore your body's physical and mental energy. There are many studies proving that those who sleep enough every night live significantly longer than those who don't sleep enough.

Many things in life are affected by lack of sleep, including:

- Emotional &ndash; Easier to become upset, frustrated and irritable
- Social &ndash; Relationships become more difficult to maintain
- Cognitive &ndash; Inability to learn
- Productivity &ndash; Less initiative and longer to perform tasks
- Safety &ndash; More accident-prone, less alertness and your judgment becomes impaired
- Health &ndash; Immune system becomes more prone to illness and diseases and become bothered by stress, tension, headaches become more prominent, fatigue and digestive problems occur

Adequate sleep is vital for our bodies to repair and heal damage caused by everyday stresses. When we sleep, our immune system repairs the cells needed to fight illness and diseases as well as replenish blood supply to our muscles. Americans are the most stressed people in the world. Because of this, we do not sleep adequately. Our sleep cycles, or lack thereof, are influenced by stress and lack of physical activity. This in turn depletes our bodies of energy, reduces our concentration and prevents our bodies from healing properly. Chronic sleep deprivation leads to premature development of Type 2 Diabetes, High blood pressure, Obesity and Memory Loss.

Tips for a Good night sleep:

- Keep your bedroom quiet, cool and dark. Keep TV's and computers out of your bedroom, this minimizes distractions.
- Keep any stressful activities out of the bedroom, especially while in bed.
- Find ways to unwind before bed, such as a warm bath, listen to relaxing music, or reading.
- Avoid any stimulants before bed, such as alcohol, tobacco and caffeine, which over-stimulate your body and interfere with your sleep cycle.
- Avoid exercise 4-6 hours before bedtime.

Sleep is as essential as food, air and water. Changes in your life, will help you ensure a better nights sleep. There are two main stages of sleep, REM (rapid eye movement) and non-REM sleep or NREM. NREM sleep, the first stage of sleep, happens when your brainwaves become slower and less regular. This occurs for about 1 ½ hours, when the waves become more active, even though you're still asleep. This brings you into REM sleep, the deep sleep when dreaming occurs. The best sleep is when you go from NREM to REM over several patterns through the night. This leaves us feeling rested and refreshed the next day. For many people, this feeling doesn't occur because most people only go through one pattern of NREM and REM sleep.

## Children and sleep patterns:

Nearly 70% of children experience some sort of sleep disruption, which diminishes sleep quality as they develop into adults. We live in a world where children are spoiled by having TV's, computers, video games available to them in their bedrooms. Kids are consuming more caffeine and other stimulants more so now than they did years ago. Lack of sleeping is another reason for childhood obesity. These sleep disruption patterns can begin as an infant. Babies are now sleeping only 12 hours a day, as opposed to 15 hours several years ago. Growing into children, they are getting 3.5 hours less sleep a week.

## Tips for parents to help your children sleep better:

- Establish a regular bedtime and stick with it, this reinforces a child's biological clock, making it easier to rest easily and awake feeling rested and refreshed.
- Eliminate distractions in their bedrooms; make a special room for TV and computer and this room becomes off-limits after bedtime.
- Avoid feeding your child a big meal before bedtime; this can keep a child up at night.
- Avoid caffeine more than six hours before bedtime; this can interfere with a good night's sleep.
- Establish a "quiet time" before bed; create a quiet-time ritual, such as taking a bath or reading them a book to help them relax.
- Make sure their room is dark and quiet and their bed is comfortable, you may use a nightlight if they are scared of the dark.
- Maintain a comfortable temperature in their bedroom, a room that is too hot or cold or uncomfortable pajamas, prevent your child from relaxing and getting a good night's sleep.

Sleep &ndash; your body deserves it!