



Wellness Review November

Sleep is Not a Luxury!

Are You Waking Up Feeling Refreshed?

Staring at the ceiling at 2:30 am, unable to sleep, is usually low on people's list of favourite pastimes. Affecting anyone at any age, insomnia (difficulties falling asleep or staying asleep) and or waking unrefreshed can be some people's reality. Research shows that adults who get fewer than seven hours of sleep (whether for just one night or over the course of days, weeks, or months) experience daytime consequences such as irritability, fatigue, and poor memory. Good sleep is required for many important functions in the body. It is vital for growth and body repair, weight management and hormonal balance. Our sleep hormone melatonin not only helps to promote restful sleep but is a powerful antioxidant and immune balancing hormone. With our busy routines and irregular work patterns good sleep is becoming harder to achieve. If you or someone you know is having trouble sleeping - it's important to get some support.

Herbal Solutions for Counting Sheep

Lack of sleep does not have to be a fact of life. There are many natural medicines that can help promote a restful, nurturing night's sleep, without leaving you feeling groggy. Some of my favourite herbs to promote a restful night sleep include Californian Poppy, Jamaican Dogwood, Kava, Passion flower, Lavender, Magnolia, and Zizyphus. These herbs are available in various forms including teas, tinctures and tablets or capsules. I find they work best when used in combination. However, it is important to find the right combination which works for you.

Magne-Zzzz-ium

Magnesium is valuable for countless actions in the body, including supporting healthy nervous system function so you are less affected by stress; or relaxing sore, tense muscles that may be disturbing your sleep. Magnesium levels may be low in those suffering from insomnia, so addressing this insufficiency can help improve sleep.

Essential Oils

Burning essential oils or placing them on your pillow can also be useful to promote relaxing sleep. Some of my favourites include neroli, chamomile, bergamot and lavender. Again it is important to find the right combination that works for you.

Sleep Tight, Don't Let the Bed Bugs Bite

Sleep is not a luxury - it is a necessity, so reducing or avoiding the factors that can negatively impact sleep can be the key to getting the rest you need. Here are some sleep enhancing tips:

- Establish a regular bedtime routine and a regular sleep-wake schedule. Avoid studying or working past 8pm in the evening. Good sleep quality is achieved by going to bed before 11pm so aim to be in bed by 10.30pm at the latest;
- Avoid daytime naps of more than 1 hour as this can adversely affect dream sleep at night. Also avoid napping late in the afternoon (after 4pm);
- Reduce or eliminate stimulants, i.e. caffeine, cola drinks, coffee and sugar;

- Limit alcohol consumption as this can promote a disturbed sleeping pattern;
- Create a dark sleeping environment;
- Invest in a comfortable mattress and bedding and use natural fibres for sleep such as cotton and bamboo where possible;
- Reduce exposure to electromagnetic fields such as mobile phones, tablets, computers and wireless networks at night while sleeping. If you need to use your mobile phone as an alarm clock, switch to flight mode;
- Reduce screen time at night after dark as studies have found that the blue light from mobile phones, computers or television sets reduces levels of our sleep hormone melatonin. There are apps available for this such as f.lux or adjust your lighting settings on your mobile devices;
- Get regular exercise as regular exercise and particularly activities like tai chi and yoga have been shown to improve insomnia and sleep quality. Aim to exercise at least 4 to 5 times weekly;
- Increase daytime exposure to sunlight or full spectrum bright light in the morning to regulate your sleep cycle;
- Find a meditation app that helps you relax, listening to relaxing music, practice meditation or deep breathing before bed. These are all useful for reducing stress hormones and increasing our sleep hormone melatonin;
- Avoid overeating at night and try to refrain from eating at least two hours before going to bed;
- Avoid drugs which reduce melatonin: Panadol, aspirin, alcohol, valium, caffeine, Prozac, ibuprofen, indomethacin, nicotine, propranolol, tobacco, Xanax. These should be consumed in the morning or early afternoon.
- Grounding or earthing yourself by placing your feet on bare ground for a minimum 20 minutes per day can help to promote relaxing endorphins and promote good sleep. Grounding also has an anti-inflammatory effect on the body and may reduce or normalise blood pressure. Sleeping on a grounding sheet at night or using other grounding devices may also promote restful sleep.

Sweet Dreams

A restful and restorative night's sleep prepares you for the day ahead and also reduces our risk of developing chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and autoimmune conditions. Good sleep is also essential for a healthy immune system and to create a healthy mood and reduce anxiety and depression. If you suffer from sleep problems it is important to identify the underlying causes of disturbed sleep, and find the appropriate solution to help you overcome your sleepless nights.

Terrie Beresford
New Age Naturopathics
terrie@newage.net.au, www.newage.net.au