

Suggestions for Improving and Restoring Quality Sleep

Every living being with a complex nervous system needs to rest. Research has shown that humans need at least 8.5 hours of sleep per night in order to stay truly healthy. Even reducing sleep length one hour, to 7 hours per night, can have negative effects on everything from endocrine function to cognitive performance.

Herbal, nutritional and lifestyle support can dramatically improve sleep quality. Every body is different and seeking clinical guidance from medical professionals, herbalist and nutritionists is recommended.

Consequences of Chronic Sleep Debt:

- Inflammation
- Impaired blood sugar control, potentially leading to diabetes
- Mood irregularity and decreased cognitive performance
- Increased blood pressure, weight gain, and increased appetite
- Decreased immunity and decreased liver function

Lifestyle Support:

- Exercise at least 30 minutes/day (10 minutes of brisk exercise, or burst exercises, three times a day is recommended)
- Turn down the lights. At least 2 hours before sleep, reduce blue light exposure from electronic devices (computer, phone, tablet, etc.) by installing a blue lighting reducing program, getting blue light glasses, or reading books instead. Light candles, turn off bright lighting, and replace white/blue lighting with amber/red lighting options instead.
- Avoid eating three hours before going to sleep to allow your body to focus on natural restorative and detox cycles during sleep, rather than digestion.
- Calm the mind and establish a stress-reducing routine before bed. Praying, meditating, or just quiet alone time with minimal distractions gives the brain a break from constantly receiving input will improve sleep quality and stress levels.
- Warm up. Being cold or having cold feet can increase the time it takes to fall asleep, wear socks to bed if necessary.
- If possible, temporarily relocate personal sleeping quarters if a partner snores or children wake in the night. Spending a week re-establishing sleep rhythms will aid in being able to adapt and fall back asleep following regular sleep disruptions.



Nutritional and Herbal Support:

- Eat less sugar, drink less caffeine, and drink less alcohol – alcohol, caffeine, and sweets affect blood sugar and cortisol levels, which can drastically interfere with sleep. Try an herbal tea with chamomile or linden flowers.
- Take multivitamins early in the day to prevent energy enhancing vitamins, like vitamins B and C, from stimulating the mind
- Magnesium supplementation can be helpful for some people. 200mg of magnesium twice a day can help to restore healthy nervous system function and revitalize sleep patterns
- Omega 3 fatty acids EPA/DHA – 1,000mg total of good quality EPA and DHA together will help reduce inflammation and heal the nervous system long term sleep deprivation and stress
- Take a dose of mild sedative herbs 30-60 minutes before you get into bed. Repeat this dose as you get into bed to go to sleep.
 - A few suggestions for herbal support include: Hops, Chamomile, Linden, California Poppy, Skullcap, Lemon Balm, Valerian and Passionflower

References:

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/white-papers/how-much-sleep-do-adults-need>
<http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/tx200538r>
http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v497/n7450_supp/full/497S13a.html