

STAYWELL



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Activity Program

It is not too late to participate in the summer HealthFest Program. Information can be found outside Brian Cole's office or online at www.intermountainpower.com.

Why We Sleep

When individuals struggle to sleep, their bodies do not recover from day-to-day demands and body systems begin to break down. This lack of sleep can cause chronic injury and illness to increase. These issues are not usually associated with poor sleep patterns, but there is a link. Problems related to lack of sleep can be minor, moderate, or severe and can be caused by simple or complex medical problems. These problems can be caused from something as simple as poor dietary foods, occasional acid reflux, different medications, or frequent urination. More serious conditions such as sleep apnea, depression, and restless leg syndrome can also contribute to poor sleep patterns.



Lack of sleep is a serious problem if it becomes chronic. Safety is a major concern when individuals are sleep deprived. Lack of sleep can cause chronic fatigue, delayed recovery from illness and injury, and can lead to a lowered immune system — making us susceptible to other illnesses and diseases.

Too often when someone is suffering from insomnia, he or she turns to a quick fix by taking over-the-counter medications or herbal

supplements and avoids finding out what the real problems are. Is this healthy? In most cases the answer is no. These supplements frequently aid in bringing on an unconscious state, but the body does not go into a restful, recovering state.

Some of the medications that are taken may actually worsen the sleep problem. Taking supplements or medications, whether used together or separately, may cause insomnia. Rather than continuing to self-medicate, the individual should learn more about the problem itself. It is best to look into the side effects of drugs, herbals, and supplements that are being taken and learn how they interact. Always ask a pharmacist for help. Next, look at your dietary habits. Certain foods may cause missed sleep, Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), or heartburn acid reflux.



Sleep Problems & Heart Disease

Sleep patterns and heart disease are interconnected. Heart disease can impact sleep, and poor sleep can lead to heart disease. Our bodies have internal mechanisms that improve function and health. When this is upset with poor sleep, it can change the timing of chemical releases in our bodies. These uncoordinated signals can affect body systems, particularly the cardiovascular system, leading to high blood pressure, poor circulation, heart failure, narrowing of the arteries, heart attack, stroke, diabetes, and obesity.

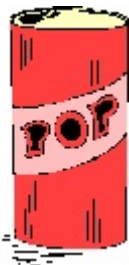
How Sleep Affects Weight

We often hear that the obesity epidemic in children is caused by watching TV, but evidence also indicates it may be more related to lack of sleep. Researchers have shown a direct link between weight gain and the amount of sleep a child gets. This is also true with adults. The odds of gaining weight increases with the amount of sleep lost in those individuals with a propensity for weight gain. People who tend not to gain weight may suffer other emotional or physical health problems such as irritability, forgetfulness, day time sleepiness, muscle pain, fatigue, mood disorders, headaches, etc.

Why does this occur? Two hormones are affected by sleep levels. One hormone increases the desire to eat (ghrelin) and the other sends signals to stop eating (leptin). Research demonstrates that sleep deprived individuals have lower levels of leptin (eating cessation hormone) and higher levels of ghrelin (eating more hormone). Once this pattern is established, the brain will send a signal that the person is nutritionally deprived and change his or her metabolism. This change causes the individual to burn fewer calories in order to save energy stores, resulting in weight gain.

Nutrition and Sleep

People who are sleep deprived usually eat unhealthy foods. These include stimulants. Drinks laden with chemical stimulants are desired to create more energy, but in actuality they lead to greater sleep problems. Simple foods high in sugar (junk food) are sought to increase energy level. However, proper nutrition is compromised and poor health, poor sleep, and weight gain may result.



While some medical conditions can lead to poor sleep habits, many problems with sleep are the result of poor choices. For example,

caffeine can suppress melatonin, which affects sleep cycles for up to 10 hours. If caffeine is consumed all day long, sleep is affected. If caffeine is taken within 4 hours of going to bed, insomnia may result. Eating shortly before bedtime can also negatively impact the quality of sleep.

Sleep Help

The following tips can help to improve sleep:

- Avoid caffeine and smoking 3-4 hours before bedtime.
- Turn the thermostat down and use warm blankets.
- Limit the amount of food eaten 2 hours before bedtime.
- Dim the lights in the house one hour before bedtime.
- Try relaxation and breathing techniques, such as inhaling to 4 heartbeats and exhaling to 4 heartbeats. Within 30 seconds, the body will start to relax.
- Avoid exercising 1-2 hours before bedtime.
- Be careful about mixing medications with supplements. Research possible interactions first.
- Don't perform work in the bedroom. Keep it as a place for relaxation.
- Avoid evening or long daytime naps.



Sources:

Harvard Heart Letter. Jan. 2007, p. 2.
Mount Sinai School of Medicine, Focus on Healthy Aging, Dec. 2003, p. 1, 6-7.
Focus on Healthy Aging, Aug. 2010, p. 5.
Nutrition Action Healthletter, July/August, 2005, p 10.