

TogetheriCan

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SLEEP - AN IMPORTANT HABIT OF HEALTH

Lack of sleep can be one of those incremental slides down the spiral to dis-ease.

If we were to stay up for 24 or 36 hours, it would have a devastating effect on our bodies, which we could recognize immediately.

However, when we get six or six and a half hours of sleep, we wake up feeling pretty good. As the day goes along, we may start to feel fatigued or somewhat uncomfortable.

We typically think that it has to do with how our day is going rather than what happened the night before.

1. Lack of sleep can **affect your immune system** in a very dramatic way.
2. Lack of sleep can create a **feeling of low blood sugar**, which in turn causes a feeling of hunger. This can lead to over-eating and gaining unnecessary weight.
3. Lack of sleep can lead to a **lack of mindfulness** and the ability to think clearly.
4. Lack of sleep will **reduce the amount of energy you have** for physical activity. Cutting back on physical activity will in-turn reduce the body's desire to sleep more. This is a downward spiral that seems to creep into people's lives.
5. Lack of sleep leads to lack of energy, which **leads to lack of movement** that leads down the path towards dis-ease.
6. Lack of sleep disrupts the circadian rhythm; this in-turn **disrupts creation of hormones**, such as melatonin and growth hormone production.
7. Lack of sleep **affects the secretion of leptin, ghrelin, and cortisol**. *All of these affect the appetite and weight control.*

Cortisol, *the stress hormone*, gets us ready for fight or flight. Part of that process of getting ready is a desire to increase our energy availability. That means we get hungry and want foods that will supply us with instant energy. Lots of sugar!

Leptin is the hormone which *controls whether the body increases cortisol or not*. Lack of sleep decreases the amount of leptin and therefore increases the demand for cortisol. Of course, this is all done on an autonomic, subconscious basis.

You have the responsibility, the ability to make choices that will allow you to get an adequate amount of sleep, so you can recuperate at night.

Muscles and organs require regeneration. The mind requires time to dream, to fall into a deep REM sleep. The mind needs time to sort out everything it learned the day before.

With today's technology, it is very simple to determine how well you sleep at night. Devices are available which will tell you how much time you were in bed, the amount of restlessness time spent during the night and whether you awoke or not. Go to Google and type in sleep monitoring devices to see which ones might be best for you.

Some suggestions to help you sleep better:

1. For better sleep, **complete darkness** is the best.
2. Keep the **temperature between 60 and 70°**.
3. **Reserve your bed** for sex or sleeping. No reading or watching TV.
4. Separate bedrooms for those whose spouses or others have snoring issues.
5. **Select a time for going to bed and keep it consistent.**
6. A **warm bath or meditation** prior to lying down can be beneficial.
7. **Avoid snacking**, especially with foods containing grains or sugars.
8. Make it a habit of **going to the bathroom** just before you get into bed.

Summary:

A good night's sleep is extremely important if you desire optimal health.

It provides energy for the following day.

It provides clarity of thought for the following day.

It assists in weight maintenance.

May you add a good night's sleep to your list of things to do!

Healthy habits lead to optimal health.

Michael McCright

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