

Get a

Do you have a hard time falling asleep? Do you wake up at 2 or 3 AM and look around the room thinking, I better get this done or that done today?

zzzzzzzz Good

Well, you're not alone! Fifty-six percent of the people in the US and eighty-five percent of the people in Puerto Rico have a hard time sleeping. Sixteen percent have insomnia and fifteen percent are so sleep deprived that they cannot work.

zzz Night's

By Paul Haider

Would you like to learn how to fall asleep and stay asleep without drugs? Just keep reading...I will cover a few ways to help you get a good night's rest.

zzzzzzzz Rest!

Did you know that sleep habits are something we learn, not something we are born with? Have you ever been so amped up that you had a hard time sleeping? Of course you have, we all have at one time or another. Do you have a regular routine of going to sleep at a set time? If not, you might think about the fact that our minds become accustomed to sleeping at a certain time.

Also, our circadian rhythms (our natural rhythm of dark and light; daytime and nighttime) play a large part in how well we sleep. The pineal gland of the brain regulates the flow of melatonin. When it gets dark outside, the pineal gland triggers a response, releasing melatonin into our bloodstream, telling our brain that we feel tired and it's time to go to sleep. As we get older a little less melatonin is released, causing us to stay awake longer.

Other studies show that the heart produces hormones that tell the body when it's supposed to be sleeping. You can't fool the body with florescent lights...it knows when it should be sleeping. So if you work the graveyard shift it will take its toll on your immune system and increase the aging process. In fact working the graveyard shift can take up to 10 years off your life.

We think and worry about everything in the middle of the night. And of course, worry and stress have a direct response on our brain and our endocrine system, causing everything to be affected.

In a study, published in the January/February issue of *Psychosomatic Medicine*, the heart

rate and blood pressure of 59 adults were monitored during sleep. There were two groups. One group was awakened in the morning and asked to read a magazine. The other group was put under stress by asking them to present an oral presentation first thing in the morning. They would only have a couple of minutes to get ready for their speech and each speech had to be 15 minutes in length. They were also told that their speech would be evaluated for content.

The study team found that the group under stress woke up more often and were much less relaxed during their sleep. They also had a shorter amount of time in deep REM sleep (Deep REM sleep is needed to feel rested and ready to go in the morning). Also, their heart rate varied greatly and this, together with a shorter time in deep REM sleep, could cause a higher death rate over an extended period of time.

Here is a list of sleep habits that you should incorporate into your life:

• **Good sleep habits start with staying away from sugar, caffeine, alcohol, chocolate and other stimulants in general.** Also, it's hard to sleep on a full stomach, so make sure you eat

your last meal at least 2 hours before going to bed. Make a list of things you need to do just before going to bed so you won't have to be disturbed by such things as, "Oh no, I forgot to put out the cat."

• **Go to bed at the same time** each night and get up at the same time every morning. You have to train your mind to shut off and know it's time to sleep.

• **Shut off the TV and computer** one hour before going to bed, and no television in bed—that's a real no-no; television only keeps your mind going. Never eat in bed; keep your bedroom a special place for sleeping and having sex. Make it a place of peace and solitude.

• **Paint your bedroom** a nice soothing light blue, green or lavender. These are the most relaxing colors for enhancing sleep.

• **Read something soothing** and relaxing, putting your mind at ease before you go to bed. It could be a great novel or even the Bible...whatever it is, just make sure it makes you feel peaceful.

• **Be thankful for the day** that you've had, and say out loud to yourself all the nice things that happened during the day. This will help you relax your mind and allow you to know that everything is O.K. Think positive thoughts about what will happen tomorrow, and allow tomorrow to unfold in the morning.

• **Keep a pad and pencil beside your bed** in case a thought comes to you in the middle of the night. That way you can write it down and rest easy knowing you will handle whatever it is in the morning.

• **Get rid of distracting noise** such as air conditioners and fans that keep you awake at night. You might also buy a recording of nature sounds such as a trickling stream or the soothing sound of ocean waves. Play these recordings just as you get into bed and even throughout the night. Sounds with harmonics, such as ocean waves and crickets in a meadow help us to slip down into deep delta sleep.

• **Keep your bedroom as dark as possible**...distracting light can also keep you awake at night. If you cannot eliminate all the light in your bedroom try sleeping with a sleep mask to cover your eyes which will give you the feeling that the room is dark.

• **Have a comfortable bed**...it's worth it's weight in gold.

• **Back Pain? Sleep with a pillow** between your knees when on your side and sleep and

with a pillow under your knees when you're on your back.

• **Magnetic mattress pads** can also help a person get a better nights rest. Many studies have shown that magnetic mattress pads help people sleep soundly.

• **Let's now talk about a way to fall asleep** effortlessly. First of all, if you sleep in pajamas, make sure they are cotton or silk. These natural fibers breathe and should be very loose fitting so you can move.

• **You might try drinking a nice warm glass of milk** just before going to bed. Warm milk has a soothing effect on the body. If you don't like milk, then try a cup of relaxing herbal tea. There are lots of relaxing teas like "Sleepy Time" and "Sweet Dreams" on the market. And, of course the old stand by...chamomile tea.

• **Hypnosis can also help** you to let go of tension and learn what it is to relax deeply so you can get a good night's rest. Any Hypnotherapist can teach you self hypnosis.

• **Melatonin capsules** can supplement your natural melatonin and help you get a better night's rest.

• **Also, Reshi Mushroom complex can help** you to sleep deeply. You can find both of these supplements at your local health food store.

• **Here is a way to fall asleep without taking anything.** Lay down on the bed on your

left side and take in a deep breath and then exhale. Make sure your exhalation is two to three times longer than your inhalation. Take 20 slow long breaths with an even longer exhalation each time. If you are still awake, turn over on your right side and do the same thing, 20 long slow breaths. Now turn over on your stomach and breathe deeply again doing the 20 long slow deep breaths. Then, turn over onto your back and take those long slow breaths again.

Most people never make it to their right side...somewhere in the middle of the first 20 breaths they fall asleep. Give it a try! It's very simple and very effective.

So, start some new sleep habits with a few of the tips I've given you here. Most of all, don't take sleep for granted, we all need rest and relaxation. Sleeping is not about being lazy, or not accomplishing anything. On the contrary, we are allowing our bodies to rejuvenate and be replenished so we can feel great tomorrow. Your body will appreciate it, and you will have a whole new outlook on life in the morning.

In India it is said that our sleep connects us with our Golden Inner Light that keeps our soul alive. Remember to connect with that inner peace every night.

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