

Wellness Ways

The Methodist Hospital, Corporate Wellness • 713.441.5978 • www.methodistcorporatewellness.com

Volume 29, June 2008

Scheduling Sleep

You wouldn't leave sugar out of your favorite cookie recipe. Don't leave sleep out of your healthy living recipe. It's not an optional ingredient. Here are three steps to take to help schedule that all-important down time:

- **Know how much rest your body needs.** Individuals need different amounts of sleep. Next time you're on vacation, allow yourself to wake up naturally and record how much time you slept without the stress of work and daily routine. Determine your optimum number of sleep hours per night.
- **Schedule time to sleep just as you schedule important appointments.** Include sleep in your to-do list. Don't overbook yourself and try to squeeze by on five hours of sleep—it will catch up with you and you cannot make up for lost sleep.
- **Sacrifice for some shut-eye.** Go without that late-night movie or mid-night e-mail check. Train yourself to prepare for sleep and relax in a dream world instead of through a TV screen or a computer monitor.

Methodist Wellness Services: Working For YOU

What is easier than exercise and dieting but can still help you maintain a healthy weight? Here's a hint: ZZZZZ.

Each year, research produces more evidence that the right amount and the quality of sleep go hand-in-hand with a healthy weight. Learn how much sleep your body needs and strategies to improve the quality and quantity of sleep in a customized Methodist Wellness **Healthy Knowledge Seminar on Sleep**. This seminar will not only help you identify sleep-related problems, it also will point you in the right direction to fix them.

Need date, time, location and phone number for Healthy Knowledge Seminar.

Sleep—An Important Key to Health & Well-Being



Sleep is a key ingredient in any recipe for healthy living. But too many people are willing to forfeit sleep to work more, take care of others, worry about details or get things done. If the average person sleeps about a third of his or her life, imagine what could be accomplished by skimping on sleep. Today's on-the-go philosophy of living seems to harken back to the old—and unfounded—expressions of "sleep is overrated" or "I'll sleep when I'm dead."

That could come sooner than expected in people who don't include enough sleep in the mix. An average adult needs seven to nine hours of sleep in a 24-hour cycle, but more than half of all Americans don't get the proper amount of rest. Everyone

knows good eating habits and exercise are important to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight, but it's easy to forget that sleep should also be part of the equation—for both adults and children.

Lack of sleep can affect the entire body and play key roles in both mental and physical health. Research studies have found a link between sleep deprivation and memory, decision-making, weight gain, diabetes and other diseases and all types of accidents.

Sleep and Weight

Losing sleep may help you gain something you don't want--added pounds. Some studies contend sleep loss affects appetite regulating hormones, stimulating people to eat more and gain weight. In the frequently cited Wisconsin Sleep Cohort Study, short sleep duration is linked to reduced leptin, elevated ghrelin and increased body mass index (BMI) in study participants.

Researchers believe the differences in the leptin and ghrelin levels in those with little sleep increase the appetite, helping fuel the obesity epidemic, especially in societies like America where sleep is often neglected and food is readily available. Another 16-year study of nearly 70,000 middle-aged women concluded that those who slept less did not necessarily eat more, even though they gained more weight. Other studies find no conclusive reasons for the link between sleep loss and weight gain, but they corroborate the two often go together.

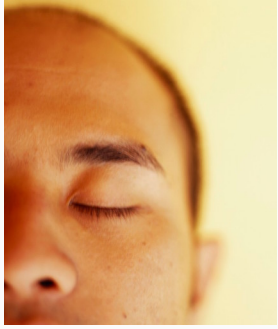
Sleep and Blood Pressure

Studies published over the last two years in the medical journal *Hypertension* lend evidence to the theory that sleep deprivation can increase a person's risk for developing hypertension, or high blood pressure. One study measured the sleep habits and blood pressures of more than 10,000 adults between the ages of 35 and 55. The study compared the differences among those who slept at least seven hours in a 24-hour period and those who slept six hours and less.

~continued on page 2

Sleep—An Important Key to Health and Well-Being

(continued from page 1)



In women study participants, the risk for developing high blood pressure was much greater—from 30 to 42 percent—among those who slept five and six hours. The study showed no relationship between sleep and blood pressure in men. An earlier long-term study of nearly 5,000 people found that among both sexes between the ages of 32 and 59, those who got less than six

hours of sleep in a 24-hour period had double the risk of developing high blood pressure.

Research continues and more studies are needed, but preliminary findings indicate that the right amount of good quality sleep can help in treating and preventing hypertension.

Sleep and Mental Health

Researchers are finding more and more evidence that a good night's sleep affects learning, memory, mood and life outlook. In a *60 Minutes* special earlier this year, the director of the Sleep and Neuroimaging Lab at the University of California, Berkeley, reported on several studies involving sleep deprivation and learning and memory. Student study participants deprived of sleep did much worse in memorizing lists of numbers. But well-rested study participants had better memories and retention.

While acknowledging the necessity of more studies, researchers involved in studying the science of sleep believe it may be even more important than we think in maintaining a body's healthy cognitive and physical function. More and more they are finding that the old expressions—"Let me sleep on it," and "Let's get some sleep and start fresh in the morning"—may actually have scientific evidence to support them.



The Methodist
Hospital

Wellness Services

6550 Fannin Street, SM 583
Houston, TX 77030
713-441-5978
corpwellness@tmh.tmc.edu
www.methodistcorporatwellness.com



Good Sleep Hygiene Habits Can Help

Is it hard for you to wind down when your head hits the pillow? Do you feel hyper and restless when you try to fall asleep? Do you frequently fall asleep during the day while riding in a car, watching TV or sitting down?



Dr. Aparajitha Verma, a neurologist and medical director of the Sleep Disorders Center at the Methodist Neurological Institute, says a person who takes more than a half hour to fall asleep, has excessive daytime sleepiness or sleeps at least seven hours and still wakes up tired should undergo an overnight sleep study. If a sleep disorder is diagnosed, doctors can then help patients decide on the best course of treatment.

Dr. Verma tells patients that good sleep hygiene is just as important as exercise and diet in maintaining good health. She offers the following tips to help get good quality sleep:

- Lower the thermostat a bit and sleep in a cool, quiet and dark place.
- Keep pets out of bed.
- Don't read, eat or watch TV in bed (this is a tough one).
- Don't watch the clock (put it in a place where you must get up to check the time).
- Find a way to wind down before hitting the bed.
- Avoid over-the-counter sleep drugs since they can interrupt natural sleep stages.
- Drink warm tea or milk to elevate body temperature and invite sleep.
- While exercise is helpful to good sleep, do it at least two hours before going to bed.

Sleep habits like snoring can signal problems such as sleep apnea and other health issues. Check the Methodist web site for a quick quiz to see if you might need expert medical advice.

(www.methodistneuroinstitute.com).