

FOREVER ACTIVE

PERSONALIZED FITNESS AND WELLNESS FOR MEN 50 +



Sleep and Insomnia

Introduction

Sleep, you can't live a productive life without it but we find it increasingly difficult to find the time to do it and to do it effectively. How many times have you heard that to be healthy we need 8 hours of sleep a night? How many times have you woken up in the morning after trying to get those 8 hours of sleep and still feel tired? Does everyone need the same amount of sleep? Why do some people seem to function on only 5 or 6 hours of sleep a night while others need 9 or 10? What constitutes a good night's sleep? Is it the quality of sleep or the quantity of sleep that is most important? What actually happens mentally and physically when we sleep? Does exercise or nutrition affect our ability to get a good night's sleep? What is Insomnia, its causes and how can it be treated? These are the questions that this newsletter will answer. If you have a better understanding of the Sleep and Insomnia then maybe it will help you get a better quality of sleep which in turn will have a very positive impact on our health and improve the quality of our lives.

What happens When we Sleep

When we sleep the body rests and the brain gets "recharged," but the brain also stays quite active and controls many of the body's functions including breathing.

Stages of Sleep

When we sleep, we typically drift between two sleep states: (1) Non-REM and (2) REM (rapid eye movement), in 90-minute cycles.

1. Non-REM sleep - This has four stages with distinct features, ranging from stage one drowsiness, when we are first falling asleep when we can be easily awakened, to "deep sleep" stages three and four, when awakenings are more difficult and where the most positive and restorative effects of sleep occur. This state is often referred to as delta sleep and if aroused during stages 3 and 4, a person may feel disoriented for a few minutes. During these deep stages of sleep, the body repairs and regenerates tissues, builds bone and muscle, and strengthens the immune system. As you get older, you sleep more lightly and get less restorative deep sleep. Unfortunately, aging is associated with shorter time spans of sleep, even though studies have shown that the amount of sleep needed doesn't appear to diminish with age.

1. REM sleep - is an active sleep where dreams occur, breathing and heart rate increase and become irregular, muscles relax and eyes move back and forth under the eyelids. REM sleep occurs 90 minutes after sleep onset. The first period of REM typically lasts 10 minutes, with each recurring REM stage lengthening, and the final one may last up to an hour.

Did You Know

Myths and Facts about Sleep

1. Sleep Apnea - This can be a life threatening sleep disorder, especially if it is accompanied by severe daytime sleepiness. It is characterized by pauses in breathing that prevent air from flowing into or out of a sleeping person's airways. People with sleep apnea awaken frequently during the night gasping for breath. The breathing pauses reduce blood oxygen levels, can strain the heart and cardiovascular system, and increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. Obesity and a large neck can contribute to sleep apnea. Sleep apnea can be treated by the use of mouth pieces, breathing devices such as a CPAP machine and surgery.
2. You can "cheat" on the amount of sleep you get. - Sleep experts say most adults need between seven and nine hours of sleep each night for optimum performance, health and safety. When we don't get adequate sleep, we accumulate a sleep debt that can be difficult to "pay back" if it becomes too big. The resulting sleep deprivation has been linked to health problems such as obesity and high blood pressure, negative mood and behaviour, decreased productivity, and safety issues.
3. Chronic Daytime sleepiness always means a person isn't getting enough sleep - This condition, can occur even after getting enough night-time sleep and can be a sign of an underlying medical condition that should be investigated by your medical doctor.
4. Melatonin as a supplement can improve the quality of your sleep - Melatonin is a naturally occurring hormone that regulates sleepiness. There is no scientific evidence to show that taken as a supplement it improves sleep.

Insomnia

The Most Common Sleep Disorder Among Adults

Insomnia is a condition that involves the following symptoms:



- Difficulty falling asleep
- Waking up frequently during the night
- Difficulty returning to sleep
- Waking up too early in the morning
- Un-refreshing sleep
- Daytime sleepiness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability

Insomnia becomes a clinical problem when:

- A person experiences trouble falling asleep three or more nights per week
- Day time functioning is impaired
- Sleep difficulties have persisted for more than one month.

Prevalence

- Over 1/3 of the adult public reports insomnia symptoms
- For around 10% of the population insomnia is a persistent problem that impairs daytime functioning.
- Insomnia is more common among ;
 - Women
 - Older adults
 - Shift workers
 - People with medical or psychological disorders.

Causes

- Emotional/Mental– stress, anxiety and depression
- Physical– Chronic pain
- Medical - Respiratory , cardio-vascular and digestive problems
- Medications – cold and allergies, heart , thyroid, pain, birth control, depression.

Treatment for Insomnia

- Identify and treat the secondary cause.(Ie - emotional, physical, medical, medications)
- Behaviour Therapy
 - Stimulus Control Therapy: creating a sleep environment that promotes sleep
 - Cognitive Therapy: learning to develop positive thoughts and beliefs about sleep
 - Sleep Restriction: following a program that limits time in bed in order to get to sleep and stay asleep throughout the night.
- Relaxation techniques - such as yoga, meditation, and guided imagery may be especially helpful in preparing the body to sleep.
- Exercise- done early in the day, can also be helpful in reducing stress and promoting deeper sleep.
- Nutrition
 - Following a proper balanced diet
 - No heavy meals close to bedtime.
 - Emphasis on minimizing fat, sugar , nicotine, caffeine and alcohol intake. (Alcohol is known to speed up the onset of sleep but it disrupts sleep in the second half as the body begins to metabolize the alcohol, causing arousal.
- Good sleep hygiene - which involves maintaining a regular wake and sleep pattern.
- Medications/sleep aids (hypnotics) - Sleep medications for the treatment of insomnia are called hypnotics. They should only be taken when:
 - The cause of your insomnia has been evaluated
 - The sleep problems are causing difficulties with your daily activities
 - Appropriate sleep promoting behaviours have been addressed

It is important to note the possible side effects of taking hypnotics, such as morning sedation, memory problems, headaches, sleepwalking and a night or two of poor sleep after stopping the medication. Women who are pregnant or nursing should not take hypnotics