

TO YOUR HEALTH

Carleton-Willard Out-Patient Clinic

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The Healing Power of Sleep

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If you've ever had trouble sleeping, you're not alone. Nearly one-third of adults in America experience insomnia. Older individuals are even more susceptible to sleep disruption. Defined as difficulty falling or staying asleep, or frequent awakenings during the night, insomnia can lead to a host of negative consequences. Fatigue, frustration, daytime drowsiness and irritability are some of the immediate side effects one might experience. For some time now, research has shown a correlation between lack of sleep and deficits in attention, emotion and cognition. Recent research indicates there also may be more permanent changes that result from poor sleep quality. Thus, it's not just the number of hours but also the quality of the sleep that matters.

Sleep is restorative; it's a basic human need and essential for good health. Aim to get 7 to 8 hours of shut-eye every night, in a dark, quiet room. That will give your body the time it needs for sleep to do some very important things that help maintain good health.

What can you do to improve both the quantity and quality of your sleep? The number one strategy is to improve sleep hygiene. You may have heard this term before; it refers to sleep friendly habits:

- Go to sleep and wake up at about the same time every day
- Avoid watching TV or reading in bed

- Cut down or eliminate caffeine, especially later in the day
- Avoid alcohol; while it may help some people fall asleep, it can negatively affect sleep quality
- Avoid exercise or heavy meals within four hours of bedtime

Optimize your surroundings for sleep. Remove the television, telephone or other electronic equipment from the bedroom. This gets rid of interruptions and reinforces that the bedroom is meant for sleeping. An ideal environment is quiet and dark with a comfortable bed and minimal clutter.



Is your mattress more than 7 years old? If so, it might be time for a new one if you're having trouble sleeping. If it's 10 years old, still comfortable and you're sleeping well, then keep it. Otherwise, it's worth considering a replacement.

Maybe you fall asleep without much trouble but once you wake up during the night you have difficulty falling back asleep. What you do next is important. First try meditation, visualization, or whatever relaxing distraction you prefer. Do something boring like organizing the sock drawer, which might make you tired enough to go back to sleep. Getting up to read a book in a quiet space with low light can help you get back to sleep. Avoid turning on the TV or bright lights. Any light at night can interfere with sleep. Blue spectrum light, in particular, has

been shown to be especially disruptive. Blue spectrum light is found in higher concentration in many energy efficient LED and fluorescent light bulbs and the screens of computers, tablets and smart phones.

What if you're tired during the day and need a nap? It's ok if you need one to get through the day, but try to take it in the early afternoon. People who nap later in the afternoon tend to fall into a deeper sleep, disrupting nighttime sleep patterns. An ideal nap lasts no longer than an hour. Even a 20 minute nap can help improve daytime alertness. Remember, if it's interfering with your sleep at night, try to avoid daytime napping.



Stressful events, depression or anxiety can keep people awake at night. A sleep diary may help uncover some clues about what's interfering with your sleep. Other medical disorders that can lead to sleep problems include heartburn, arthritis, nocturia, sleep apnea and restless legs. If you are having trouble sleeping, talk with your health care professional to discuss your concerns. Identifying and treating the underlying cause can greatly improve sleep.

If insomnia has become a regular occurrence it may be time to talk with your healthcare provider about treatment. Medications may seem like an easy solution when you can't sleep, but sleeping pills can have significant side effects. Morning grogginess, memory problems and increased risk of falls are some serious risks to consider. Many sleeping pills can lead to dependency and sleeping problems can actually worsen after they are discontinued. Sleeping pills should be used cautiously, in the lowest dose and for the shortest duration possible. Without getting to the core of the problem, medications could be doing more harm than good.

Sleep has restorative powers, it's vital for maintaining both physical and emotional health. Sleep duration and quality can be as important to your health as your blood pressure and cholesterol level. Talk with your health care provider if you're not getting enough good quality sleep.

Health Education Lecture

Dr. Robert Stern

**Alzheimer's Disease & Dementia 2015:
Reasons for Hope**

This presentation will provide an overview of the latest information and research pertaining to Alzheimer's disease. Anyone touched by this disease or thinks that they may be, could benefit from attending.

Dr. Stern's presentation style combines humor, compassion, and science, and will provide a reason for hope to all those affected.

**Please join us for this very informative lecture on
Wednesday, October 7, 2015
10:30 am – 11:30 am**



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**Please watch for dates
and times in the next
Bits and Pieces.**

