

THE NATUROPATHIC PERSPECTIVE

BY SHELBY WORTS, BSc, ND

SLEEP

Are you looking to feel more rested and refreshed when you wake in the morning? While statistics indicate that upward of 58% of adults experience bouts of insomnia at least 3 times each week... I find that only seldom do people tell me they are happy with their sleep.

Insomnia is poor quality sleep due to any of the following:

- difficulty falling asleep
- waking up frequently during the night with trouble returning to sleep
- waking up too early in the morning
- not feeling well rested, even after sleeping 8 hours at night

There are many **factors that influence your sleep**, including:

- your evening activities; are they mentally stimulating? Studying long hours, playing video games, watching television, etc. can create difficulties falling asleep.
- your evening activities; are they physically stimulating? Vigorous cardiovascular exercise raises your cortisol level, a hormone that should be low in the evening to support restful sleep and body tissue healing.
- meal time; are you eating within 2 hours of bedtime? Your body will sleep better if it is not still digesting your food.
- food choices: are you consuming stimulants (ie. caffeine, sugar, additives) after 5pm? Avoiding stimulants can influence falling to, and maintaining, sleep.
- meal size; is dinner your largest meal of the day? Put more focus on your lunch meal while making dinner a lighter fare.

As well as...

- stress; do you practice regular relaxation to improve your body's adaptation to stress? Relaxation is an active process (ie. yoga, meditation, progressive relaxation, etc.)... lying on the sofa and watching a movie may feel relaxing but it is simply a distraction.
- hormone dysregulation; are you waking in a sweat? Whether it is female-, male-sex hormones, or insulin, hormone cycles that are not naturally regulating well can disrupt your sleep.
- light; is your room completely dark? Melatonin, your sleep hormone, is stimulated by darkness and the absence of light; creating a very dark environment in your room will support your natural sleep/wake cycle.
- and many more individualized factors. A naturopathic doctor can discuss these with you.

Did you know?!? Each hour of sleep before midnight is worth 2 hours of sleep after midnight. Therefore you will get a better quality of sleep from 10-6 than you will from 1-9... even though they are both 8 hours of actual sleep time.

Emma's Update:

Emma is feeling great! She was thrilled to learn on December 18th that her weight has reduced by another 5lbs; this is a total loss of 18lbs since May 2006. What Emma feels most excited about (next to wearing long-neglected articles of clothing) is her relationship with food. She does not feel like she is denying herself anything, is eating wholesome & satisfying foods, and her sugar cravings are gone... for the first time in her life. Emma now feels like she has control over her food choices... and not the other way around.

Emma is looking forward to a strong, healthy and energetic 2007.