



The Secret to Sleep

By Christine Maria Gross

In this article learn about your body's natural biorhythms and how they contribute to sleep, your immune system and the foundation of your health. Find out the best time for optimum sleep and some simple natural methods to help you sleep.

We have all experienced a sleepless night-- tossing and turning, checking the clock, watching the movies in our mind play over and over again. But when one night turns into days, weeks or even months we need to find out what we are doing in our life that might be contributing to this problem.

We know how good we feel when we have a good night's sleep—energized, joyful, clear headed, and ready for the day. Sleep is our body and mind's natural de-stressor and is the time when we process and release accumulated stress and experiences of the day. Sleep is responsible for our good health, memory and emotional balance. Sleep is our natural healer. Difficulty sleeping is an indication of imbalances in our bodies as well as a movement away from the natural rhythms of nature.

Back to Nature

During sleep, we connect with the natural biorhythms not only of our body, but of nature all around us. We can find some answers about this and how it can affect our well-being through an ancient natural healing system. I would like to introduce to you Ayurveda, considered to be the mother of all natural medicines which incorporates many natural methods to restore, balance and correct health challenges. Ayurveda, a wonderful comprehensive system of health and longevity, reveals many secrets to us and recognizes that our physical well-being is connected to the biological cycles of nature, to the deeper laws of nature, and to the universe itself.

Our modern lifestyle has really taken us away from following nature. We all are grateful to Thomas Edison for the light bulb, however, it has caused us as a society to ignore our natural rhythms and go to bed later and later after the sun sets. We work late, sometimes on shifts through the morning, stay up watching television, go on the computer, and eat late, when we should be preparing for bed or be in bed. But what if I shared with you that sleep is one of the pillars to our health, and directly connected to cancer prevention?

The Secret

It is not how much we sleep, but when we sleep that is the secret. Some of my clients have said that they dread night time

and going to bed, so they stay up as late as possible and sleep in during the day. Although they may sleep during the day, they are not getting the most important deep rest which only happens once in our 24 hour clock cycle. That magic time is between 10pm and 2am. It is only at this time our body repairs, heals, and receives the deepest rest. So if we are awake during that time, we are missing out on a lot for our overall health and wellness.

The Melatonin-Cancer Connection

There is significant interest and studies that have shown melatonin- a hormone, to be a powerful cancer fighter. In the British Journal of Cancer, researchers found that not only does melatonin block the tumour-promoting effects of the hormone estradiol but also inhibits prolactin, which is a tumour promoter. They found that the levels that were the best were those found and produced at night. So given news like this, how can one optimize melatonin production?

The brain only produces melatonin when it is dark, so it is important that we have a dark room when we sleep, no lights from the window or clocks with bright lights. We also don't want to fall asleep with the television on.

More proof is found in an article published in the January issue of *O, The Oprah Magazine*, highlighting the research Dr. David Blask, MD, PhD, the head of chrono-neuroendocrine oncology at Tulane University School of Medicine. Dr. Blask found through experiments "that breast cancer cells actually stop growing when bathed in about the same amount of melatonin that the brain manufactures at night. He said, 'The hormone basically puts tumours to sleep.'" So armed with this knowledge, we can explore some things we might be doing that are contributing to our sleepless nights.

Causes of Insomnia

Actually everything we do, think and eat during the day affects our sleep. How much coffee or caffeine drinks we have, if we eat a large meal before bed or snack on sugary foods late at night can keep our digestive system active when it should be slowing down. The light from computers and televisions actually



stimulates and affects our ability to sleep. It is not just about what we do before bed, but being mindful of our daily practices. Here are a few suggestions for preparing for bedtime:

Natural Suggestions for Sleep

Take a relaxing bath

Try aromatherapy: use a few drops of calming essential oils such as lavender, rose or jatmansi in a saucer of water by your bed or in a diffuser in your room.

Eat your largest meal at noon. Have a lighter meal in the evening and try to avoid meat at this time as it is harder to digest.

Play music for creating a relaxing environment.

Practice meditation or listen to a meditative cd.

Have a cup of warm milk by 7:30pm and try not to drink a lot of liquids after 7:30pm.

Practicing restorative yoga postures can be relaxing for the body-mind.

Keep your bedroom dark.

Have good airflow and a cooler temperature while you sleep.

Avoid watching television or being on the computer late at night.

It is possible to change our habits when we have knowledge and methods to help us! The clinical studies that continue to happen prove what the ancients knew thousands of years ago, to be in rhythm with nature is the greatest healer.

Good sleep nourishes, repairs our body-mind and prevents disease like no other medication could ever do. Sleep allows us to look good and feel great, have more energy and have the

ability to experience more happiness, love and joy in our lives. I have supported many clients as they make changes, and have witnessed their transformation through the benefits of a better night's sleep.

May you sleep well! ☺

Resources

Better Sleep Council of Canada: www.bettersleep.ca

National Sleep Foundation: www.sleepfoundation.org

Ayurveda: The Power to Heal Book by Paul Dugliss, M.D

Natural Sleep Inducement - CD by Solitudes

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