

Are You Tired Of Being Tired? Get some sleep!

Insomnia is a major problem in the US and is among the top ten most researched health topics on the internet with over 30% of people having a sleep disorder during their life. The two main categories of sleep disorders are sleep onset insomnia, not being able to fall asleep, and sleep maintenance insomnia, waking during the night, or it can be a mixture of both.

Sleep disorders need not be obvious. People with sleep disorders sometimes report that they fall asleep fine and sleep through the night but wake un-refreshed and are tired throughout the day.

There are many causes for these disorders. Some are minor but some can be very serious. The most common causes of sleep disorders are stress, anxiety and depression. Other causes include pain, allergies, a poor sleeping area, reactions to foods, herbs and medications, restless leg syndrome, waking to urinate, nocturnal hypoglycemia and sleep apnea. Sleep apnea is the cessation of breathing for up to 10 or more seconds. It can be a serious problem and should be assessed by your primary care physician.

Using a sleeping pill under the care of a physician may be indicated in rare instances but there are many potential problems associated with using pharmaceuticals including dependence, rebound insomnia when the pills are stopped and side effects. The other downside of taking anything for sleep is that it does not address the root cause. Stress, for instance can cause a major imbalance in the hormonal cycle responsible for sleep. An imbalance of cortisol or melatonin can cause you to have problems getting to sleep or staying asleep by actually tricking your body into thinking it is the morning and it's time to get up. These can be checked with a simple salivary test which will determine where the levels are and what the appropriate protocol is to get them into balance.

Another problem that causes people to wake in the night is nocturnal hypoglycemia, low blood sugar at night. It can cause hot flashes, night sweats or simply make the body wake up.

People who wake to urinate, even once per night are not getting restful sleep. Sometimes it is due to simply drinking water too close to bedtime or drinking things that cause your body to urinate such as sodas, tea, coffee and some vitamins, herbs and medications. Drinking coffee, tea and sodas can be a major cause of insomnia for another reason. Caffeine can stay in your system for 18-20+ hours. If you do the math that means your morning coffee can be causing your insomnia.

Botanical sedatives such as Chamomile, Passion Flower, Hops and Valerian can be effective in helping with sleep. They are usually milder and cause less side effects than pharmaceuticals. Melatonin, 5 HTP and other such substances are the next step after the herbs I mentioned above. However, even though they are available over the counter they are hormones and hormone precursors and are not harmless as they can disrupt the sleep/wake cycle, cause imbalances with neurotransmitters and can interact with medications including anti-depressants. They should only be used under the guidance of a properly trained healthcare provider!! If you need anything to improve your sleep on a regular basis you are not finding the cause of the problem which can be accomplished by assessing medical history, testing for sleep apnea and by some functional testing such as the saliva test mentioned above.

Everyone has an occasional problem sleeping. If it becomes long term get checked out by a healthcare practitioner as something serious might be going on. Sleep is a fundamental need for your body, making it a priority in this fast paced world will improve your ability to cope with stress and will keep you healthier throughout your life. It's your life. It's your health!

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