Get a Better Sleep!



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We all know that adequate quality and duration of sleep are important for our good health. However, a report by Statistics Canada indicates 1/3 of adult Canadians are not meeting the recommended 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night. This group also experiences poorer quality of sleep more frequently than do those who sleep the recommended number of hours. Of the individuals included in the study, 43% of men and 55% of women reported trouble going to sleep or staying asleep.

Sleep can slide down on our priority list when trying to balance a busy schedule, work stress and family responsibilities. In addition to feeling the immediate effects of a bad sleep the next day, inadequate sleep may also be linked to health problems such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, injuries and depression. While we may not be able to remedy every influence on our sleep hygiene, we can adopt habits that encourage better sleep. Start with these simple tips:

- Make your bedroom a restful and relaxing environment. Focus on making the space quiet, dark and cool. Lower the volume of outside noises with ear plugs or a white noise machine. Consider using heavy curtains or black out shades: studies have shown darkness can be a powerful sleep cue for the brain. Invest in a good quality and comfortable mattress and pillow. Wash your pillow every six months to help prolong its lifespan and remove body oil, skin cells and hair that the pillow can absorb.
- Take time to relax before going to bed.
 It can be helpful to establish a routine of relaxing activities beginning about an hour before bedtime. Taking a warm bath, reading a book and deep breathing exercises are all proven ways to relax the body

- and mind. Avoid stressful or stimulating activities, which can cause a rise in cortisol levels and increase your alertness. Avoid TV or computers just before bedtime: the light they emit inhibits drowsiness.
- Keep a consistent sleep and wake pattern by going to bed and waking up at the same time each day. Yes, even on the weekends! Consistency helps reinforce your body's "internal clock".
- Avoid caffeine before bed, which acts as a stimulant. While alcohol may bring on sleep, after a few hours it too acts as a stimulant, increasing the number of awakenings at night and thereby decreasing the quality of our sleep.
- Regular daily exercise can help you fall asleep faster and sleep more soundly.
 Aim for 30 to 60 minutes of moderate physical activity per day. However, because exercise can stimulate cortisol production, try to exercise at least three hours before bedtime.

If sleep disturbances are an ongoing issue for you, speak with your physician. Identifying and treating any underlying causes will help you get the better sleep you need and deserve.

REFERENCES:

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