

Stress Management Tips from Dr. Stephen Green

Improve Your Sleep

Many people find it difficult to get a good night's sleep. They wake up in the morning feeling as if they have run a marathon or concluded an adventure film as the loser. Stiff necks, sore jaws, sore muscles, even headaches greet these people upon awakening. Although these symptoms may not plague all those who suffer from poor quality sleep, all start their day already fatigued and hardly ready "to take on the world".

There are many causes for poor sleep. A poor mattress or pillow are common causes. Many people do not consider that mattresses and pillows have limited **useful** lives. Unevenness, lumps, sagging or excessive hardness or softness play a role in an uncomfortable mattress and pillows. Consult with your chiropractor about sleep posture as well as mattresses, if you suspect a problem. Also, sleep problems may be caused by medical conditions affecting the metabolism (thyroid, digestive, menopausal, and neural conditions to name a few). Medications also play a role in affecting sleep. Thyroid medications, diuretics, some heart medications, anti-depressants and other psychotherapeutic medications are a few. Check with your prescribing doctor or pharmacist about these issues. Of course, all stimulants whether prescription, or caffeine (coffee, coke, tea, etc.), as well as herbals can affect sleep. Many people will have sleep problems having caffeine after 2pm in the day, even 'decaf' coffee can affect some people at night. So go easy on the stimulants after noon. Also, late night meals may affect sleep, because digestion is slowed and disturbs brain waves.

However, the most common cause of poor sleep is **stress**. The stress of feeling overloaded, never feeling caught up, concerns about job, family and personal relationships cause most people to carry their thoughts and feelings to sleep with them. The unresolved emotions of a time of trial can haunt you in your sleep and create dream states that reflect your sense of helplessness, conflict and loss of self worth. After a long and tense day, your body will not have had a chance to work the waste from the muscles which creates further physical tension. Worse yet, poor sleep exacerbates your sense of helplessness and inability to cope, since you feel tired before you have begun the day. It seems to be a never ending cycle from bad to worse, since being tired affects performance on the job, interferes with active relationships and contributes to a sense of low self esteem. Where to Start?

First, examine those things you can change easily: 1. **When** do you have **stimulants** and when do you have your last meal. **No stimulants after 2 PM. Plan your meals** to be lighter (low fat) in the evening and then finish dinner before 3 hours of bed time. **No midnight snacks.** Note: Alcohol is also a stimulant and disturbs sleep. 2. Check with your doctors about **medications** or possible **medical conditions** contributing to poor sleep. 3. Have your chiropractor check for **musculoskeletal problems** contributing to the problem. 4. Check your **mattress and pillow**: sometimes turning it over and around can improve sleep until you can replace it. 5. **Increase your exercise** in the evening to help clear your body of toxins and focus your attention on the simplicity of a healthy body.

Then try the following:

Healthy Sleep Prescription:

1. *Turn off the TV an hour before bed or go to a quiet room to clear your mind of the frazzling images of the "boobtube". Prepare for bed as usual.*
2. *Make a simple list of things you don't want to forget for the next day to clear your mind and reassure yourself that you don't have to hold onto them during the night.*
3. *Do a simple stretch routine for 5-10 minutes before bed, this prepares the body for sleep without increasing your metabolic rate. Ask Dr. Green for a stretching flyer.*
4. *Take a series of long deep breaths with an audible sigh to help clear the emotional tension. Ask Dr. Green for his "Sigh brochure". You are now ready for sleep.*

Sleep is a time for the body, mind and emotions to realign and clear before the next onslaught of stress and conflict. These simple measures give you a head start and allow deeper sleep. Some gentle herbal mixtures can also help but try this first and notice the difference. This approach puts you back in control.

If your problem does not respond to these simple suggestions, we have on staff a Guided Imagery Counselor who works with insomnia and stress reduction.

If you have further questions contact Dr. Stephen Green at (845)294-9990