

## Rest: Second of the Five Factors of Health

The day after a bad nights sleep can be an irritating, stressed and painful one. String a few nights of this together and we can get downright mean and unproductive. Those of you who find it difficult to get to sleep and/or to stay asleep take heart as there are a number of simple remedies to improve your sleeping habits.

We all know that sleep is vitally important for our body's regeneration and healing, but how much sleep do you need? The simple answer is; just enough sleep so you feel rested the next morning. There's no need to get hung up on how many hours you sleep and whether it's more or less than eight. In general, a short nap in the afternoon (the siesta zone between 1:00 and 3:00) will leave you more rested than the same amount of rest tacked onto your morning sleep.

If you have difficulty getting to sleep, here are some tips that can help:

- Eat a high carbohydrate evening meal.
- Review the side effects of your prescription or over-the-counter medication.
- Exercise regularly to stimulate deeper sleep.
- If your mind is racing in circular worry patterns, keep a pad of paper and a pen next to your bed to write the worries down so you can deal with them the next day.
- Reserve the bedroom for sleeping and lovemaking; keep stressful discussions, work, eating, and TV out of the bedroom, especially at night.
- Use mental and muscular relaxation techniques; take a few minutes to visualize yourself in a warm, relaxing, safe place; then move from head to toe contracting and relaxing each muscle in your body.
- Try the following herbs for sleep: chamomile tea, hops, passionflower, catnip, basil, violet leaves, and lemon verbena.
- Take a warm bath before bed.
- Remove all stimulants (caffeine, etc.) from your diet.

Those of you with difficulty staying asleep:

- Eat a whole grain or complex carbohydrate snack (potato, whole grain cereal...) 45 minutes before bed.
- Avoid drinking fluids one hour before bed.
- Avoid sweet/sugary foods at night.
- Take 1000mg each of calcium and magnesium before bed.

One last note, take a peek at the time you are waking up. If it's the same time each night it may be an indicator of an organ or gland imbalance. Refer to a Chinese medicine meridian chart to figure this out.

Sleep well!

Dr. Rick

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