



Healthy approaches to disordered sleep

By Jacqueline Fields, MD and founder of Dr. Fields Sacred Skin | June 15, 2014

Our society is so fast paced it is not conducive to healthy sleep patterns. Insomnia is a huge problem in our country. Our culture inundates us all with overstimulation from media, caffeine and lights. All this affects our natural rhythms of the body that our conducive to good sleep patterns. There are many health conditions which contribute to poor sleep such as pain, anxiety, restless legs, and hot flashes from menopause. A more important issue is how poor sleep it-self increases the risk of lots of diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity, strokes and infections. Studies from medical residencies found that staying up for greater than 30 hours created decreased reaction times and dysfunction equivalent to a blood alcohol level of .1 which is legally drunk.

We may be all suffering from overstimulation and darkness deficiency. The constant city lights, rush hour drives, TV, computers, and cell phones interfere with life's fundamental rhythmicity.

Insomnia comes in several varieties:

1. Problems falling asleep
2. Problems staying asleep
3. Premature awakening
4. Poor quality of sleep

Each issue requires different solutions. Some basics for all sleep issues is to have good sleep hygiene. This means to avoid overstimulation with stimulants such as caffeine, medications, alcohol, drugs or even exercise prior to sleep. Some people may use alcohol to fall asleep. But then those same patients usually have a 2 am wake up because the toxic burden to the body. The body needs rhythmicity, ritual, and regular patterns. The bed needs to be a place of sleep and intimacy, not other activities such as TV and eating. If you do not fall asleep within 20 min. get up and do something for a while before returning to bed. Keep the room dark, cool and quiet. Avoid watching the clock.

Mind body therapies to improve sleep include meditation, relaxation, imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, biofeedback and breathing techniques. The Healing Gardens has fantastic practitioners which can assist with all these options. Another fantastic tool is unit called alpha stim. This is a machine that uses frequency to assist your brain to find and stay in an alpha wave length pattern, which is deep relaxation. I view this as a drive through meditation. If you want to try this call the office to further discuss at 970-472-6789.

If you have problems falling asleep commonly this is related to one's stress levels, anxiety and worries. Some great options to lower our stress and cortisol are the above mind body techniques but if you are looking for an appropriate product you might try Sedalin or **Stress Arrest**. **Sedalin** is an herbal blend of magnolia officinalis and ziziphll spinosa. The data shows this combination relaxes tense muscles and lowers stress hormone levels.

If you have problems staying asleep consider a trial of **Somnolin** by Metagenics. This product is a combination of L-tryptophan, theanine and nutrients which support methylation or phase 2 detoxification of the liver. Blockage of this step is what seems to give people that 2am wake up I discussed earlier that alcohol can create. Sixty percent of people have a genetic mutation of the phase 2 detoxification pathway. If this methylation is an issue for you affecting your sleep, and somnolin doesn't help then another trick is a trial of glutathione 100-200mg at bedtime. If you are still having issues then the methylation detox step may need more support and consulting one of the Healing Gardens practitioners might be your next step.

If patients have myalgia or muscle pains that affect their sleep, magnesium is fantastic. For myalgia, also remember to optimize your Vitamin D level to a serum of 60-100. Consider a trial of **MAG calm** at bedtime. This is a powdered form of Magnesium which is very effective. One other option that is in the Medicinal store is called Neuro Mag.

Finally if it is the depth or quality of sleep one must be sure they do not have apnea. If that is excluded one could consider a trial of L-tryptophan or theanine for deeper sleep.

In summary remember that homeostasis requires rhythm, repetition, regularity and routine. Rhythms rule our world and our bodies. Rhythmic activities of our body and mind include our hormones, circulation, digestion, brain waves and states of consciousness. We spend 1/3 of our lives asleep to allow our immune system to do its work effectively, to allow our brains to process information and trauma and to detoxify our system. Recognize the essential role of sleep. It keeps us youthful, repaired, detoxified and overall healthy.

Remember the old proverb: "one hour of sleep before midnight is worth two after."

Article title: Healthy approaches to disordered sleep

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Date: Originally Web published in May 9, 2014

Publisher: The Healing Gardens, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA

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Web source:

<http://thehealinggardens.org/images/PDFs/Article%20Archives/Healthy%20approaches%20to%20disordered%20sleep%201.pdf>