

Get The Restful Sleep You Need Naturally

By Melissa Wood



Eating the right foods consistently and managing stress properly are just two of the critical foundations that promote optimal wellness.

The third — getting a good night's sleep of 6-8 hours naturally — is just as important as the others, and it's one of the easiest things you can do for your continued good health too.

Unfortunately, a number of problems can converge to get in the way, adding to your sleep debt and making your body extremely vulnerable to illness.

1. Hormonal imbalances — too much of one hormone and not enough of another — will definitely disrupt sleep. (This problem is worse for women, especially as they age.)
2. Too much of some things (caffeine, carbs and sugar) and not enough of others (whole foods) can disrupt blood sugar, causing blood sugar dysregulation and sleep disturbances.
3. A go-go-go lifestyle full of emotional stressors that keeps you awake far longer than it should.
4. The presence of dim lights in your bedroom, like catching up with your email late into the night on your iPad, watching TV or sleeping in a room with night light that's way too bright, suppresses the body's production of melatonin.

The Easy Way Out

Too bad, many folks take the quickest way out, relying on a prescription drug — or several — to force their bodies to rest. This addiction can be especially deadly if you rely on drugs like Lunesta (eszopiclone) or Ambien (zolpidem) to help you sleep.

A recent Scripps Clinic study found the more sleeping pills a patient took, the more vulnerable he/she would be to cancer and death, compared to those who didn't.

Patients who took a prescription sleep drug minimally — up to 18 doses annually — were 3.6 times more likely to die. The odds of dying increased fourfold when patients took as many as 132 doses per year, and beyond those dosages, by a factor of five.

Simply, our bodies do not have a deficit of Ambien or Lunesta. Prescribing these medications for sleep problems do not address the true cause of the insomnia.

Simple, Safe Steps You Can Take To Sleep Better Today

Fortunately, there's plenty of safe and natural lifestyle changes you can take that may alleviate your sleep problems without dangerous prescription drugs that can worsen, if not shorten, your life.

- Develop a relaxing sleep routine and stick to it, even on weekends.
- Limit your intake of caffeine and nicotine to a minimum and stay away from eating heavy meals late in the day.
- Don't overindulge on alcohol; yes it's a relaxant, but it also will disrupt your blood sugar and affect your sleep.
- Keep your bedroom as cool as possible.
- Use your bedroom as a place to rest and relax, not to sit up for hours on end working and playing on your laptop computer.
- Incorporate some form of exercise into your routine, but not too close to your bedtime.
- Take steps to better manage your stress.
- Make any afternoon nap you take a short one (no more than 30 minutes).
- For dog and cat owners, keep loving your attention-getting pets, but from a distance. Keep them out of your bedroom.

Should these simple changes not make you any sleepier, more drastic measures, like taking a prescription drug, aren't your final answer.

Your next call should be a consult with a qualified natural health practitioner who can provide the tools and support to help you get more sleep. Oftentimes there might be an underlying condition that only a practitioner would be able to address. Since they will analyze your whole body, they are more likely to find an imbalance and be able to recommend supplementation to fix the problem.