

The Importance of Quality Sleep on Health and Metabolism

Sleep is truly the best medicine for overall health and optimal vitality. It is unfortunate that getting adequate sleep is the most underutilized weight loss and wellness strategy. Quality sleep is often replaced with less impactful activities like watching late night television, or endless catching up on work and poor stress management. When it comes to achieving optimal health 7-8 hours of quality sleep per night is not to be overlooked.

There is endless research available that shows a direct relationship of poor sleep and obesity. It truly only takes one night of poor sleep to negatively affect metabolism. Insulin levels and carbohydrate metabolism are negatively affected the day after one poor night's sleep resulting in excess fat storage and decreased fat burn according to the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism*.

Think about the last time you had a poor night's sleep and try to remember the way you ate the following day, you were probably consuming excess carbohydrates and caffeine looking for quick energy sources. Sure one day of poor sleep will not develop serious metabolic disorders; the problem is many people have learned to live off of low quality sleep. The result is poor metabolism and gaining excess weight, contributing to serious metabolic issues like Type 2 diabetes, adrenal fatigue, insufficient thyroid and the list goes on. As we age we also tend to survive off of less sleep, this is directly related to increased risk of cancer, brain fog and dementia.

Unfortunately there isn't one solution to improve sleep that works for everyone. Finding the best solution for you has everything to do with understanding and addressing what causes those sleepless nights to begin with. The best way to approach improving quality of sleep is to make small changes.

Slow down, answering e-mails and catching up on work off the clock will not make you more productive, try to unplug from your professional commitments when you are at home winding down. This will clear your brain and only make you more productive when you are at work.

Stress management is the key to successful sleep. If you are stressed then excess cortisol will be produced putting the body in a state of "fight or flight." Excess cortisol suppresses melatonin (the sleep hormone) and serotonin (the good mood hormone) production, reducing the ability to get uninterrupted sleep while putting the adrenals in a state of fatigue and exhaustion if cortisol production is high for a long period of time. Engage in meditation, yoga or simply incorporate activities that bring you joy into your everyday life.

Shut off the television an hour or two before bed time. The light from the television affects your body in much the same way that daylight does, think about how bright the casinos are in Las Vegas, they want you to be wide awake at all hours of the day. Also, most TV shows are not relaxing and they may raise your levels of stress hormones, which is one of the worst things you

can do for your metabolism at night. Add a digital video recorder to your cable plan and record your favorite shows for another evening. Read a book or just take some time to relax. Over time this will reduce the amount of tossing and turning you do while trying to fall asleep.

Avoid eating a heavy meal before bed, this puts your digestive system in overdrive and may not be too comfortable while trying to fall asleep. It is important to eat all natural foods that do not contain any harmful chemicals, dyes, preservatives, hormones or antibiotics. Consuming harmful chemicals will also decrease sleep quality.

Ensure you are getting quality nutrients from food and supplementation. Magnesium has been shown to help restless leg syndrome in addition to a core supplementation program of multi-vitamins, fish oil, and probiotics. If the body is deficient in any nutrients sleep quality will be affected.

Consider supplementing with 5-HTP, this is a precursor to two important hormones melatonin and serotonin. If those hormones are depleted it will be difficult to fall asleep and could cause excessive sugar and carbohydrate cravings.

Aim to have a cool, dark and quiet bedroom. Noisy gadgets or even pets and bright lights from clocks or baby monitors can interrupt quality sleep and affect your overall health over time.

Be consistent, we push our kids to adhere to a specific bed time, why don't we do the same discipline for our own health. The best window of time to sleep is between the hours of 10pm-6am, this correlates with the body's natural rhythm and natural light patterns, sun rise and sunset.

Improving sleep quality may take away from the hours that you are awake during the day but the mental clarity and increased energy will be worth it for the hours that you are awake!

References:

1. The Endocrine Society. **One Sleepless Night Can Induce Insulin Resistance in Healthy People.** *Science Daily* 5 May 2010 (<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/05/100505091632.htm>)
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