

How To Put An End To Sleepless Nights Safely

Sleeplessness or insomnia affects millions of people every year. The reasons are varied: anxiety, illness, an overactive mind. A recent poll by the National Sleep Foundation (NSF) found that 60 percent of American adults experience sleep problems.

These problems include difficulty falling asleep or waking several times during the night, causing an interrupted and restless sleep.

Many people take sleep for granted. It is one of the elements needed to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Proper sleep correlates to good health — mentally, emotionally and physically.

A poor night's sleep can lead to increased risk of heart disease, weight gain, lack of focus and the

inability to perform daily activities, and may negatively impact relationships with children or a spouse.

Just how much sleep is enough, though? Sleep needs vary.

Most healthy adults require an average of eight hours of sleep a night, though some can function fine on as little as six hours. Children will need more, nearly 10 or 12.

Secrets To A Good Night's Sleep

So what's the secret to sleeping soundly? Follow these tips for a satisfying slumber.

1. Don't nap during the day. It will only make you less tired at bedtime.

2. Exercise regularly, but make

sure it's a few hours before bedtime. If you work out and then go to sleep, your body won't have time to wind down.

3. Watch what you eat and drink. Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol late in the afternoon and evening. Stimulants will keep you awake, and a full bladder may awaken you during the night.

Eat dinner at least three hours before you go to bed, especially if it's a large meal.

4. Your bed should be for sleeping. Don't use it as a place to read, watch television or talk on the phone. That way, you will associate nothing else with your bed other than sleep.

5. Rooms that are too hot or too cold aren't conducive to sleep, so

maintain a comfortable and cool temperature in the bedrooms.

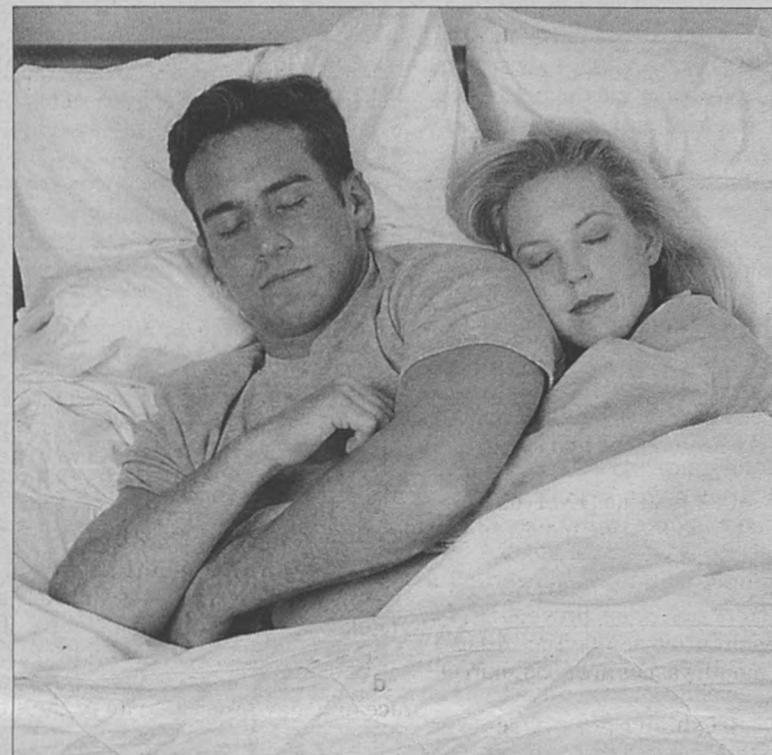
6. Don't be kept awake by street lamps or car headlights. Draw blinds or curtains to prevent any sources of light from entering the room.

7. It's hard enough to fall asleep when it's quiet, and even harder when it's noisy! Block out sounds

with earplugs or soothing music.

8. Relax before bedtime. Follow a nighttime routine, whether that means reading a book, listening to soothing music, stretching, or taking a hot bath.

9. Rely on natural sedatives rather than sleeping pills to help you sleep.



Information For Expectant Parents

The appearance of a plus sign, two lines, or whatever pregnancy test indicator informs a woman that she is expecting can signal a time of change and excitement.

Many people look forward to having a baby and are anxious to experience the changes and joys that lie ahead.

During the first few weeks of a pregnancy, the body is transforming at a rapid pace and many things are taking place. If this is a first pregnancy, you may be unaware of what to expect.

While no one wants to think of complications arising early on in the pregnancy, it's important to be aware of certain warning signs and consult with your doctor if you experience any odd conditions.

A situation that may occur in the first trimester of pregnancy of which many women are unaware is a subchorionic hemorrhage. Also known as a subchorionic hematoma, subchorionic bleed or clot, a subchorionic hemorrhage (SCH) is the most common sonographic abnormality in the presence of a live embryo.

It is estimated that 25 to 40 percent of all women will experience some sort of bleeding during the first trimester of pregnancy. An SCH is often the cause.

An SCH is a collection of fluid and blood that forms between the uterine wall and the chorionic membrane.

While there is no concrete cause, some surmise it occurs during egg implantation. The egg slightly separates or tears from the uterus causing a bleed.

There is nothing a woman did or could have done to cause or prevent them.

An SCH occurs to pregnant women of all ages and races. Depending upon the severity of the hemorrhage, a woman could experience mild to moderate bleeding, cramping and other symptoms — or no symptoms at all.

An SCH is a risk early in pregnancy because the blood clot itself can cause a miscarriage.

The clot can release completely from the uterus and cause the fetus and placenta to miscarry.

According to WebMD, pregnant women with a demonstrable hematoma have a prognosis worse than women without a hematoma.

The outcome of the fetus depends on the size of the hematoma, the mother's age, and the fetus' gestational age.

Rates of miscarriage increase with advancing maternal age and increasing size of hematoma. Late first- or second-trimester bleeding also worsens the prognosis.

An ultrasound can shed light on whether you are experiencing a subchorionic hemorrhage and help determine the course of action.

Treatment for an SCH varies among doctors and there is no definitive cure for the condition. Nature simply has to take its course.

Most hematomas resolve themselves by 20 weeks of pregnancy, either being reabsorbed or bled out.

Doctors may suggest you go on with your normal activities. Others advise you take it easy, meaning no heavy lifting, frequent resting, no exercise, and no sexual intercourse. Bed rest may be suggested if deemed necessary.

With frequent doctor check-ups and care on the part of the mother, many pregnancies go on to full term despite an SCH. Consult with your

obstetrician to learn more about the condition and to discuss any concerns if you experience any bleeding or abnormalities during the pregnancy.

It is preferable to err on the side of caution if you find anything that goes against the norm.

Do not hesitate to call your doctor and assuage your fears. That is what he or she is there for.

Helpful Exercise Tips For Seniors

For those who are older and want to get in shape, the American Academy of Family Physicians offers these tips for starting an exercise program:

* Wear comfortable, well-fitting clothing and sturdy shoes with good arch support, and an elevated and cushioned heel to absorb shock.

* Check with your doctor first, then start slowly with exercises you are most comfortable with.

You'll be less likely to injure yourself and you will prevent soreness. Start with walking. As you

become used to it, you can increase the intensity of your workout.

* Engage in some type of aerobic activity (walking, swimming or bicycling) for at least 30 minutes every day, and resistance or strength training two days per week.

* Warm up for five minutes before each exercise session by walking slowly or stretching. Cool down with more stretching for five minutes (longer in warm weather).

* Don't exercise if you feel under the weather, have a cold, the flu, or

another illness. Wait until you feel better. If more than two weeks pass, be sure to start slowly again.

* If your muscles or joints are sore the day after exercising, you may have overexerted yourself. Next time, exercise at a lower intensity.

* If pain or discomfort persists; if you have chest pain or pressure; have trouble breathing or have excessive shortness of breath; are light-headed or dizzy; have difficulty with balance; or feel nauseous while exercising, talk to your doctor.

Vegetarians On The Rise In US

The number of vegetarians throughout the country appears to be on the rise. In 2006, the Vegetarian Resource Group, via a poll conducted by Harris Interactive (R), asked Americans 18 and older which foods, if any, they never eat.

The list included meat, poultry, fish or seafood, dairy products, eggs, and honey. By definition, 2.3 percent of respondents were found to be vegetarian, replying that they never ate meat, fish or poultry.

Nearly triple that amount, 6.7 percent, replied that they never ate meat. When broken down by gender, more women are vegetarian than men, though not by as great a margin as one might think. Of the women polled, 3 percent were vegetarian, while 2 percent of male respondents were vegetarian.

Where the greater disparity among the genders exists is between men and women who don't

eat meat. Nine percent of female respondents said they never eat meat, while 5 percent of men admitted to never eating meat.

Perhaps most interesting was that male vegans outnumber female vegans, albeit very slightly. Vegans are defined as people who do not eat meat, fish, poultry, dairy, or eggs. The poll found that 1.4 percent of males were vegan, while 1.3 percent of women followed a vegan diet.