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by Neville Amis

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About The Author

Neville Amis had undiagnosed sleeping problems for a few years.

They affected his health, relationships and his ability to do his work to the standard he was really capable of.

Neville was told by his doctor that a lack of quality sleep was a major factor affecting his life.

He made fixing his problems a priority instead of continuing to accept that his constant tiredness and frequent minor illnesses were a price he had to pay for his fairly successful career.

He started to make simple changes and was amazed at the improvements he felt in himself and his interaction with those around him.

Neville realized that many people were also suffering from various sleeping problems. Some were, like him, unaware that they didn't have to accept them as part of their lives.

Others were unable to find ways to deal with their problems.

So, Neville did some research on the best information about sleep problems and how to control or remove them.

"I wanted my book to help people that were suffering in their work and relationships as I had been."

"This is a plain language guide by an average person who has started to reap the rewards from dealing with his own sleep problems."

"I hope it will be as helpful to other people in that situation."

Introduction



As the pace of our daily lives and the pressure on us increases while we try to produce quality work and provide for our families, many people find that their sleep suffers.

Often, people will give up some of their sleep to have more “productive” time. They don’t realize that those periods of sleep play a vital part in our lives.

Getting a good night’s sleep regularly is vital for ensuring that you feel your best and perform at your best.

But, few people accept that this is very important. Many still believe the old theory that sleep is a necessary nuisance and a blank hole between the important productive and enjoyable parts of our busy lives.

Despite the research to the contrary, many people think interrupted sleep is normal in the modern world.

Sleep provides our brain and various systems essential time for rest, repair and improvement of our physical and mental resources. Many of the benefits which uninterrupted, restorative sleep are needed for are still not fully clear.

But, we cannot be at our best if we reduce our sleeping time or accept that interrupted sleep is a normal part of modern life. These attitudes can prevent us from achieving anything like our full potential and even damage our health over time.

I used to think like the need to trade-off my sleep for my success too. It is perhaps the biggest barrier to reducing the impact which poor sleep and its consequences have an on our health, family life, work performance and the national economy.

When I stopped accepting poor sleep as a consequence of my lifestyle, I started looking for ways to help improve my situation.

I’ve written this book to give you the latest information I found.

Not every suggestion will be something which specifically relates to you. But, I believe that you will find many things which will help you to improve your own sleep and assist family members with any related problems that they may have.

This book is a result of my personal journey to improve my own sleep. After I started to experience the difference in my own life, I used the research skills which I’d used as an instructor and writer to find out more about the whole subject.

I give you an overview of points you should discuss with your doctor or other medical professional. I’ve also included explanations of some common terms to help you to understand why they ask you the questions and use their advice to get the most benefit.

This book will also help you to recognize signs which should be checked by a doctor. These signs are often accepted as part of the price we pay for our busy professional and personal activities.

When you finish reading this book, you can look forward to better rest and that can often translate into greater success in your personal and business lives.

I know that was my experience.

Neville Amis

The Importance of Sleep

For all the research over many years, we don't know the whole story of the benefits which we get from following a proper pattern of sleep and activity.

But, research with rats showed that reduced sleep has lasting effects which increase with the level of the short-fall in quality sleep.

The National institute of Health in the U.S.A. reports that rats which were not allowed to have any Rapid Eye Movement (light) sleep lived just a few weeks, but their normal life span would have been about two years!

Sleep provides benefits for the proper operation of our body's nervous system, but the exact nature of the relationship is not fully clear yet.

Researchers say that an essential growth hormone is released when young people are in the light R.E.M. phase of sleep. Obviously, anything which causes interruption or loss of this phase can have serious consequences.

Researchers say that the areas of the brain related to learning are stimulated during the R.E.M. stage. That may explain why infants seem to have much more of this sleep phase than older humans.

If someone cannot get adequate R.E.M. sleep, it has an effect on their ability to retain information which they have recently acquired. If people are taught something and then allowed to sleep, but not allowed to get any R.E.M. sleep, they will probably not be able to remember the new information which they got just before their sleep session.

If they are allowed to sleep and their non-R.E.M. sleep is interrupted but they get some R.E.M. sleep, they will probably be able to recall and use the new information.





This is a strong indication that a good sleeping pattern can be important for anyone that is learning new information or skills, whatever their age.

Adequate sleep is also important for people when they are operating machinery or involved in any complex, critical decisions.

The wider community has many examples of the problems caused when people are encouraged to sacrifice sleep and its benefits in favor of longer working hours and higher productivity.

For individuals, that can mean lower quality production, reduced quality of life and a significant rise in the number of accidents.

How Much Sleep Do You Need?

The amount of sleep that you need depends on many factors which do not affect every person to the same degree.

Although there are figures which are commonly accepted as healthy for the average person, there is a wide variation in what different people can get used to while still performing their work and keeping up with their social and family activities.



Babies seem to need up to sixteen hours of sleep each day.

Teenagers can operate well with about half that.

Most adults also operate best when they get about eight hours a night.

Particular individuals may need an hour less than that and some will need more. It is hard for us to judge what is best for ourselves. Our thinking and decisions are affected by our personal desires and peer pressures to fit many social and business commitments into each day.

Because of these pressures, most people will probably sleep more lightly and often for shorter times as they grow older. This does not take account of the fact that the demands on our aging bodies and mental abilities still require as much quality sleep as before.

If we nap rather than get sufficient sleep to enjoy complete sleep cycles, the benefits of that sleep are greatly reduced.

Everyone will also, naturally, need more sleep when (or very soon after) we are under extra stress but, of course, that is not usually available to us at those times.

Research suggests that we start to incur a “sleep debt” when we cut down too much from the amount which our body really needs.

Teenagers usually think that they really only need a fraction of eight hours each day. Their youthful strength and attitude can mask most effects for a while but there will be a reckoning to some degree later on.

Another important factor is whether we look after our health. If we have a regular exercise program and follow a good diet, this can help to reduce the effects of insufficient sleep, but only to a degree.

If we do not look after ourselves, then we are likely to suffer some serious consequences in the future.

Our ability to deal with the demands we put on our bodies will be reduced and all areas of our lives will be poorer because of that.

It is inevitable that the sleep debt which someone has will affect their mental and physical capacity after a while unless they get some extra quality sleep so that they can reduce their “sleep debt”.

Effects of Sleep Loss

A lack of appropriate periods of quality sleep will affect your energy level and quickly show in poorer levels of work performance.



Sleep deprivation will affect your ability for doing any activity which involves hand-eye coordination and focused physical activity, such as driving, playing sports or operating equipment.

Your interaction with your family, colleagues and other people will also suffer.

Although the symptoms you have may not become worse in the short term, the effect on your health and lifestyle will only increase if you do not do something to improve the situation.

Common signs of a sleep debt include:

- Having difficulty with focusing your eyes
- Faulty short-term memory
- Frequent yawning

Deprivation can be Torture!

This is an example of the serious effect which loss of sleep can have.

One of the most common methods used by interrogators through the centuries is to deprive their victims of sleep.

This involves preventing them from being able to sleep.

Most of us will be aware of the effect that can have on us when we deliberately go without sleep to have more time for parties and other social events, or try to complete some important work objective. It is clear that the effect would be much greater if someone was under the control of their enemies.

They also let them fall asleep but wake them up at frequent, irregular intervals. This affects the quality of all the sleep which the victim gets because they never know when they will be woken again.

This also prevents them from having any deep, restorative sleep.

It has proved to be very effective, causing distress and disorientation which makes the victim more likely to give the questioners the information they are looking for.

This sort of treatment leaves no marks or injuries but the emotional and physiological effects are great and tend to be long-lasting.

When people, soldiers and civilians, are trapped and subjected to bombing or artillery bombardment in any conflict, they are unable to get regular sleep.

Soldiers who were sent back to hospitals from the trenches during the First World War were given psychiatric help and the opportunity to sleep safely each night. Many were judged to be ready for returning to combat in a remarkably short time.

Sometimes, those decisions might have been influenced by the urgent demand for more soldiers in the combat area. But, it seems that the recovery period was often unexpectedly short.

The specialists probably claimed much credit for that but their methods were fairly basic at that time.

It is likely that much of the benefits came from restoring the soldiers to an area where they could be sure of safety while they slept.

Get a Check-up

Self diagnosis has only limited value. It can encourage you to make changes to your daily routines, diet or to start an exercise program.

But, the things you notice and relate to your sleeping problems may sometimes also be indicators of the possible presence of other, more serious conditions and even diseases.

It is well-known, for instance, that people often ignore the signs of insomnia, the most common sleep disorder. They may feel that it is something they just need to put up with or they may not want to invest the time and money going to the doctor.



But, insomnia and some other sleep problems should be checked by a doctor to eliminate the possibility of more serious conditions and also ensure that any treatments or procedures you use for your sleep problems are safe and appropriate.

Sometimes your doctor may order a sleep test to have your symptoms checked in depth.

The risks to yourself are just one reason for getting a professional check-up or asking your doctor’s advice during your next appointment.

Some studies suggest that physical coordination and mental fitness of people with severe sleep deprivation may sometimes be as bad as someone who has had too much alcohol!

Sleep deprivation can increase the possibility of the affected person being involved in an accident which is dangerous for them and everyone around them.

The presence of a significant sleep debt can magnify the effects of alcohol someone has consumed. Many of the over 100,000 traffic accidents caused by driver fatigue in the U.S.A. every year are probably caused by sleep deprivation and other sleeping problems.

Sleep Problems

This section explains the most common sleep problems, their causes (where known), effects and possible treatments.

It's important to realize that some problems can cause similar symptoms and no book can be an effective alternative to a check-up by a qualified professional.

My intention is that my ebook will give you the best information I have been able to locate about the various problems to inform and reassure you.

It will also help you to understand what your doctor says and guide you when you start your road to recovery and the better life you deserve.

Insomnia

Signs: You probably have insomnia if you cannot fall asleep when you are ready to, or keep waking up when you would reasonably expect to be able to stay asleep.

Another sign is when you cannot fall asleep as quickly or smoothly as you have been used to.

You probably have insomnia if you have had a regular amount of sleep but feel you have not had much rest.

Description: Insomnia is probably the most widespread sleeping problem.



Insomnia is a condition, not a disease. It is not believed to cause the onset of any disease. But, studies made about the occurrence of insomnia in people that have particular diseases suggest that insomnia is more common with people that have certain diseases than in the general population.

Most people are affected by insomnia at some time.

More women seem to have insomnia than men; but that may just be a result of women being more likely to tell their doctor about their symptoms and seek advice than men.

Although insomnia can affect people of almost any age, older people have insomnia more often.

Some researchers claim that as many as ten percent of all Americans have chronic or persistent insomnia.

Figures for insomnia in the U.S.A. are much higher than many other countries; but researchers believe that the actual occurrence of insomnia is not much different in most developed countries.

The main reason suggested for the difference in the figures is the different criteria which the various countries use for collecting their information. The

rates in developing countries are probably similar but they don't see collecting this sort of information as a priority.

Sleeping problems are believed to be much more widespread than the figures show because many people who suffer from sleeping problems do not consult their doctor about them or even mention it when they have a consultation or check-up.

Insomnia is a significant problem for individuals and families, affecting their health and their interaction with each other.

It also has a significant cost for employers because of the effect on work performance and absenteeism.

But, many people accept their insomnia as something which is normal for someone with their type of lifestyle. They either do nothing about or try to self-treat with over the counter remedies or by adjusting their lifestyle.

They continue to accept a less satisfactory and often less healthy life than they could have because they don't realize that:

- It's not "normal"
- Insomnia can be controlled fairly easily for most people
- Their self-treatment can give temporary relief from the symptoms but may mask the presence of other, more serious conditions which should be investigated by a doctor

If more people were treated, there would a positive impact on absenteeism and productivity. Many families would probably also have fewer arguments too.

Occasional short periods of insomnia are probably not serious; but insomnia shares its symptoms with some diseases, so it is worth checking if your symptoms last more than a few days or re-occur frequently.

All sufferers from any form of insomnia will get some help by asking their doctor for advice when they have their next check-up.

There is a form of insomnia which has serious, usually fatal, consequences; but it is fortunately very rare. People in the affected groups are mostly aware of the risk they may have and that a test is available to them.

Fatal Familial Insomnia is a condition which can be diagnosed by testing for a rare gene. When F.F.I. appears, the person starts to lose the ability to sleep. They do not reach the deep stages of their sleep cycle where their bodies can restore and renew themselves. This causes extreme strain for their systems.

Causes: Many things have been suggested as causes for insomnia.

Emotional upsets and trauma frequently cause insomnia and other sleep-related problems.

Over-use of stimulants, such as caffeine, is a common factor.

Some medications prescribed for asthma, colds, allergies and certain heart conditions may cause insomnia.

Pain from physical problems like arthritis can interfere with the amount and quality of sleep which you get.

Treatment: There are medicines, therapy programs, and lifestyle changes which can help deal with most types of insomnia.

It is vital that each person’s insomnia be carefully checked to ensure that the actual cause is identified and the right treatment for them is worked out.

Lifestyle changes can be of significant help, including:

- Reducing the use of stimulants like caffeine and/or depressants like alcohol
- Checking medicines that you are taking which may cause the symptoms
- Setting a sleep pattern and keeping to it
- Removing, where possible, factors which are causing or encouraging the insomnia

Some medicines, including “natural” herb-based preparations are claimed to be useful in dealing with insomnia and some other sleep problems.

The natural medicines are relatively unregulated in most countries but may contain quite powerful ingredients.

Check with your doctor before you consider buying anything for self-treatment of your sleeping problems. They may, for instance, contain substances which could affect the usefulness of prescribed medicines you take.

Some herbs can cause serious problems for some people such as diabetics, pregnant women, and people with other significant medical conditions.

Programs, such as Cognitive Behavior Therapy, focus on improving any stress and anxiety in the patient’s life, developing better sleeping routines and reducing or removing any problems.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy

This type of therapy is widely used by professional therapists to help their patients understand and channel their thoughts and actions into the most helpful directions.

Some consultants use the therapy as the basis for most of the work they do. Others use some of the Cognitive Behavior Therapy techniques mixed with those from other sources.

C.B.T. is claimed to be very helpful for many people suffering depression which includes some people with serious sleep problems.

C.B.T. may help you to look at your past actions and results in a more positive light which can help you to start to build your confidence and become better at dealing with problems, including interacting with other people.

They usually suggest a set number of visits and then review the amount of progress, taking into account your views.

For C.B.T. to be effective, you must follow any suggestions the therapist gives you at each session.

Some people have reported that it has helped them a lot.

If you try this, approach it with a positive attitude and don't worry if results take time.

Snoring

Snoring is a problem which can be as disruptive to your partner’s sleep as your own, sometimes even more so!

Some people start to snore when they have an allergic reaction to something in the air.

Their nasal passages are clogged by mucus and may become constricted.

Sprays and other preparations may provide temporary relief by removing some of the mucus and helping the airways to become clearer.

But, it is a good idea to check with your doctor whether the snoring is just a symptom and if there may be a problem which needs further treatment for you to get lasting relief.

Many people use aromatic oils which are claimed to have similar effects to the chemical products.

You can put a few drops on your neck or under your nose.

Some people just have an open jar of their favorite oil in their bedside table. I think that would cause more rapid evaporation of the oil which would increase the cost of using it.

It could also give some risk that the oil could be contaminated or spilled if the jar has a wide mouth.

If you have decided to try using some sort of aromatic oil after consulting your doctor, make sure that you get quality oil. Some cheaper preparations may contain other substances which could cause a reaction themselves.

Some people find that they don’t snore if they sleep in certain positions, most commonly on their side instead of on their back.

You can ensure that you sleep more in that position by sewing a small ball onto the back of your sleepwear. Of course, this is likely to cause you to wake a few times when you roll onto your back before you become trained to sleep in the new position. That means you could actually lose more valuable sleep than you gain for a while.

There are a variety of devices which are sold for reducing or eliminating snoring. Some clip around or into your nose.

These may be effective for some people but I think they would just make the problem worse if you have a blockage in your airways from an allergic reaction.

So, you need to work out whether the device addresses your actual problem before you make the investment and put you and your partner through the stress.

Some strips widen the nasal passages and hold them open through the night. I have not tried them so I cannot comment on their effectiveness.

Your doctor or druggist can help you with the selection and other information about devices and other treatments which are most likely to be suitable for you.

Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a serious problem for many people. It causes frequent interruptions of between 10 to 30 seconds in their breathing when they are asleep.

Each of these upsets causes them to either wake completely or just enough so that their body can deal with the temporary condition.

Then, they go back to sleep.

But, the sufferer has lost some of the benefit they would have got if their sleep had not been interrupted. After each episode where they woke up, their body has to start a new sleep cycle and the amount of R.E.M. sleep they get is significantly reduced for that night.

Many people with the condition may have up to a few hundred of these pauses in one night!

The easy flow of air from your mouth to your lungs is interrupted and you may begin to snore.

This is a signal that the passage which the air flows through is becoming blocked. It may take up to 30 seconds for your brain to recognize the problem. Then, you are woken up enough so that your body can clear the airway and you start to breathe normally again.

If this happened just once or twice, it might not be a problem. But this cycle can occur a couple of hundred times each night. These pauses, called apneas, can seriously affect the quality and amount of sleep which you get.

Your airway may become blocked because:

- Fatty tissue has developed which blocks it
- Your tongue falls into a position where it blocks the airway
- Muscles in your throat relax more than usual and temporarily let the airway become blocked
- Your airway is unusually narrow

This can also affect children as well as adults. It is a potentially serious problem and should be checked by your doctor.

One major problem from sleep apnea is the reduction in the quality of your sleep because of the interruptions to your sleep cycles.

This results in a tendency to fall asleep during the day. **NOTE:** This symptom can also be caused by narcolepsy, a quite different condition.

There is also the potential for serious consequences from the interruptions to your breathing during your sleep.

Jet Lag

Jet Lag is a consequence of your travel interfering with your body’s normal sleep/wake cycle.

It is often joked about but the affects of the fatigue which it can cause must be considered. They can be very serious.

Researchers claim that most people’s biological clock has a natural cycle of between twenty-four and twenty-five hours.

But, the clock is strongly influenced by bright sunlight or other bright light, so it adapts to follow the twenty-four hour day.

The pattern it follows is called the Circadian rhythm.

When you travel internationally, you confuse the settings in your body. It is ready to sleep when you are probably getting ready for an important business lunch and so on.

If your travel is only within the same time zone, you will have to suffer only minimal effects.



Effects: The more time zones you cross, the longer it will probably take your body to successfully adjust.

When the travel is in a Westerly direction, you may notice you wake earlier. Travelling in an Easterly direction may delay your desire to sleep with the effect of causing you to become sleep-deprived.

Jet lag can cause problems with your digestion and cause you to get less enjoyment from even your favorite meals.

You could suffer more headaches and they may be quite severe.

Your ability to concentrate and complete complex mental tasks can be significantly reduced.

Suggestions

- In the time before you travel, maintain a healthy nutritious diet, regular exercise and making sure that you get your normal amount of rest where possible.
- Try to arrange for a break in your journey of sufficient duration to help your body’s adjustment to the new time zone.

Two treatments being evaluated which are not recommended at this stage are exposure to a bright light and taking melatonin.

Carefully controlled use of exposure to a bright light (preferably sunlight, otherwise a bright artificial light which is not too strong) is claimed to be able to help your body to deal with the problem but this needs to be confirmed by more independent research on large numbers of people over extended periods.

Some people claim that taking the supplement melatonin can reduce the effects of jet lag. But this is not recommended by the relevant authorities. Check with your Doctor for the latest information about whether this treatment might have gained more credibility and whether it may be suitable for you.

There are some measures which you can take while you travel to help you feel better when you reach your destination.

Maintain your water intake. Water is the most important liquid we drink by far. Try to ensure that you will have access to plenty of good drinking water when you get to your destination.

Keep your consumption of alcohol, caffeine and other stimulants and depressants to a minimum. These substances reduce the amount of water available to your body for its essential needs.

Try to sleep. Make sure you are comfortable when you sleep or you may wake with aches that reduce your enjoyment of the journey and interfere with your activities after you arrive.

Wear comfortable clothing.

Stay active while travelling. Move around at least every half hour when you are awake.

Where possible, keep your feet slightly raised when you are sitting and keep your knees at right angles.

These measures will help you be the best you can be after you reach your destination:

Eat at the same times as the locals. This will encourage your body to adjust to the local schedule.

Where possible, give yourself a day when you arrive at your destination where you don't have to make critical calculations or decisions.

Get maximum possible exposure to sunlight that you are comfortable with during the early stages of your visit. But, don't take any risks of getting skin cancer.



Narcolepsy

Narcolepsy is one of the most serious sleeping problems.

It is a chronic disorder now believed to be caused by the brain not properly regulating the patient’s sleep and wake cycles.

Researchers say that it may result from something which affects the part of the brain which controls R.E.M. sleep.



Most people have sleep cycles of about one hundred minutes and enter the R.E.M. sleep stage after more than one hour.

People with narcolepsy are likely to start having some R.E.M. sleep a few minutes after falling asleep.

People with this condition suffer uncontrolled short sleep incidents every day which can be from one minute to about ten minutes in duration. These cannot be predicted which makes it risky for people with the condition to operate machinery or do many other things which the rest of us can take for granted.

They feel sleepy most of the time.

They wake frequently through the night.

They may feel paralysed as they are falling asleep or waking up which is very frightening.

Another disturbing symptom is when they dream vivid and often upsetting dreams while they are still awake just before going to sleep or just waking up. These episodes are usually just images but sometimes other senses are involved.

Scientists say this is another indication of the uncontrolled intrusion of R.E.M. dreams into their waking state.

Narcolepsy is a condition which affects all racial groups and both males and females worldwide.

The reported incidence of the condition varies between countries. Estimates put the rate in the U.S.A. at about one in two thousand.

But the figures may be lower than the reality.

The exact cause of narcolepsy is still not certain.

It does not seem to be hereditary though several members of a family may get it.

Other factors such as infection, stress and trauma are possibly connected with some incidences of narcolepsy.

About seventy percent of narcolepsy patients have cataplexy where they suddenly feel weak and unable to control their muscles. If this condition appears before the excessive sleepiness which also affects narcolepsy sufferers, their doctor may think it is a seizure. That can lead to the wrong type of treatment and cause greater problems.

During sleep, they may also suffer temporary paralysis of their muscles so they cannot talk or move.

This is similar to the paralysis which the rest of us have when we are in R.E.M. sleep. We don't notice it because we are asleep. But narcolepsy sufferers feel it because they are not fully asleep when it occurs.

These conditions are very scary but are not known to have any lasting effects. The patients recover their usual ability to speak and move after the episode ends.

A few young children, about three years of age, have been diagnosed with narcolepsy but most patients are diagnosed between the age of ten and twenty-five.

Getting a confirmed diagnosis of narcolepsy may take years because it is not well-known even with many doctors, the symptoms may vary and its progress can be fairly slow and hard to recognize.

There is no cure for the condition but drugs which help to control the sleepiness and cataplexy (which are the most disabling symptoms) are currently available.

Sleep Inhibitors

This section gives details of things which cause many people to have problems getting enough of the right kind of sleep.

Some have a medical connection and some are related to lifestyle choices which we make.

I will tell you what I have found out which may give you some relief from each problem. But, you must consult your doctor if you are affected by any of these problems which may require medical treatment.

You will have to decide how to deal with the lifestyle factors which are the basis of the other problems.

Your Lifestyle

Many people can help themselves to reduce or eliminate some sleeping problems which affect them by recognizing and making a serious effort to improve some aspects of their lifestyle.

Smoking

This is an obvious factor in the development of many sleeping and other problems.

I recognize that it much easier to say that we should reduce or eliminate smoking from our life than it is to do.

There are many complex factors working against our desire to stop smoking and they are beyond the scope of this e-book.

So, I will just suggest that you do what you're able to and work toward eliminating smoking from your life if you can.

The effort will be rewarded and there will be benefits for those around you as well as yourself.

Weight

This is another complex subject and not as easy to do as some suggest.

But, even any small improvement in your weight will be reflected in a reduced risk of various serious medical conditions. It will also probably cause a reduction or, in some cases, elimination of some sleeping problems.

Pets in the Bedroom

Many people let their favorite pet sleep in their bedroom and a significant number allow them to even sleep on their bed.

There are many health concerns from things which might be lurking in their mouths or fur, or have been carried inside on their paws to keep you awake all night.

If you want to get anything like a good sleep, it's much better to have them sleep in another room.

The basic problem is that each species have different sleep patterns to humans.

Your pet may feel ready to explore the room or the soles of your feet just as you are entering a period of REM sleep which is very important for you.

Those interruptions and the inevitable visit to their outside toilet during the night will stop your body achieving a full quota of rest each night.

Your own tossing and turning will also disturb your pet's sleep cycle, so neither of you will get the rest you need.

But, there are other penalties from this too-close association.

Each interruption to your natural sleep cycle requires that your brain and your nervous system readjust before you can actually reach a sleep state.

Also, your body will react to small movements or noises which your pet makes during the night and that will cause further interruptions to your sleep.

You will probably be completely unaware of these small interruptions but they can have a significant negative effect on how you feel the next morning and your overall well-being.

This association is not just unhealthy but can also affect the relationship between you and your pet, especially if it is a dog. Dogs are pack animals and, to maintain discipline and ensure that it obeys your command, you need to be leader of your pack. When you let it sleep on your bed, you lose that position and drop to being on the same level. This can cause problems when you have to assert your authority over it in the future.

Whether you continue to let your pet share your bed or bedroom is your decision.

You don't need to put your pet outside all night every night but, if you give them separate sleeping quarters in another part of your home, both you and your pet will have a much better chance of getting an appropriate amount of quality sleep in accordance with your different sleep patterns.

That may also help when, at some time, you might have to be away from your pet for a time, while you are on holiday or if they have to stay overnight at the veterinarian.

Drinks

Drinks are one of the most common factors which can cause us to have poor quality sleep.

The main considerations which lead to problems are:

- The timing of our drinks
- The quantity consumed
- The content of what we drink



Alcohol

Many people think that an alcoholic drink can help them sleep better but the reality is that it is likely to have an opposite, negative effect.

Caffeine

Many people have a drink of coffee, tea or hot chocolate before going to bed. But, all three of these beverages contain significant amounts of caffeine which does not contribute to a good night's sleep.

Eating chocolate or anything which contains chocolate also puts more caffeine into your system.

Energy drinks which contain caffeine or guarana (a relative of caffeine) are also likely to affect the quality of your rest.

Lack of Water

The human body really does need the equivalent of about six to eight glasses of water every day. That should be plain water and in addition to the water content in any other liquid you drink.

Drinks with caffeine or sugars will cause the removal of some of your body's stored water through urination.

This will need to be replaced or your body will suffer.

Lack of water affects all parts of the body, including the nervous system.

The first organ which is affected by very low levels is the brain.

Help Yourself to Better Sleep

Prepare Properly for Sleep

The best way to get better sleep is to set a pattern and a timetable which recognizes the high importance of proper healthy sleep for you.

Avoid drinking anything much for an hour before bed.

In particular, don't take stimulants or sedatives unless they have been prescribed for you by your doctor.

Caffeine, guarana and alcohol will all affect the amount of quality restorative sleep which you can get.

Many people find it more comfortable sleeping on their side. This can also help to reduce the amount and severity of any snoring which you do.

Schedule your sleep and try hard to stick to your schedule. Unless you can keep to it for at least two weeks, you are unlikely to get much benefit.

If you are feeling the effects of a sleep debt, the easiest way I found to reduce it and start feeling more alert through the day without artificial stimulants, was to go to bed about a half hour earlier each night for a few weeks.

That wasn't possible every night but being fairly consistent with my amended schedule showed some improvement in my alertness fairly quickly.

Make Your Bedroom More Sleep-friendly

People sleep in almost every room of their home at some time. You can understand that a casual sleep in other areas is unlikely to produce as good a rest as you should get in your own bed.

The bedroom is the one place where you should be confident of getting a good, healthy sleep. But, many people don't and it is often their own fault!

This chapter will show you some simple ways may make your bedroom more sleep-friendly.

You don't have to follow these or any other suggestions if they don't suit you.

The biggest problem that many people put in the way of getting proper rest is they turn their bedroom into a multi-purpose room.

Keeping your bedroom for its main purposes will make it much more likely you will achieve a proper level of rest and recuperation from everything which the world throws at you.



Your bed: Take care in selecting your bed because you will spend a significant part of the next few years in it. Your partner should always have equal input to the decision.

The height of the bed should be about eighteen inches if there are no pressing reasons for a significant variation.

Choosing the most suitable mattress requires that you test some by laying on them. You might be impressed by claims in a brochure but the most expensive model or the latest hi-tech design is not always the best choice.

It is your actual experience with the product which matters.

Your mattress has to give you support but also the comfort which will help you rest easily.

Since you will usually be tired when you are preparing to sleep, you might consider leaving your mattress testing until mid-afternoon.

Check if the mattress causes any part of your body to feel out of alignment or uncomfortable. That may increase when you have been using the mattress for a few months.

Although many people recommend a firm mattress, the firmness level needs to align with your own feeling of comfort or you will get less rest or feel sore or irritable the next day.

Most stores offer some sort of refund or exchange policy which can be important if problems with the bed or mattress you selected show up after a few days use.

Some people need to consider how the mattress will help or hinder a medical condition which they have. They should consult their doctor or specialist before making this significant purchase.

Your medical professional will be able to take into consideration your particular state of health and also the experience which their other patients have reported when using various brands.

Rotate or turn over your mattress as recommended by the supplier. You won't get the full support from your bed if you don't and it may not last as long.

It's easy to forget to do this because we often may not notice the changes in its shape and level of support which happen slowly over time.

Many of these factors also apply to pillows. The “old faithful” pillow we are using might not be providing the support and comfort we could get from a new one.

Hypoallergenic covers for your mattress and pillows are important if you have any allergies.

De-clutter Your Bedroom



Many people use their bedroom for things which can interfere with their ability to get proper sleep.

They:

- Read books
- Play computer games
- Review or prepare the paperwork which they have to take to work the next day
- Discuss important, private things with their partner.

The last is understandable if there is little chance during the rest of the day for them to have private discussions.

But, using your bedroom as an extension of your office or an electronic entertainment centre is likely to reduce the amount and quality of the sleep which you get.

All of these things keep your mind, and often your body, active.

Your body needs some cues to start the preparing-for-sleep process.

Watching television or listening to the radio can delay your body being ready for sleep. Watching TV, where the programs and the advertisements are all designed to have a strong effect on your emotions, can mean that you will find it harder to drift into sleep.

Light: Strong light is a signal for your body that it is time to wake up. Keep the level of light in your bedroom low enough that it doesn't interfere with your sleep or cause interruptions to the sleep cycles.

Try to control or block light from outside the room too.

If you cannot block the light sufficiently by other means, try those small masks which airlines provide to their passengers for sleeping.

Sound: This is a frequent source of sleep disturbance. Block as much as you can from external sources and also remove or reduce sounds within your bedroom.

Some people have a clock with a loud tick or very loud alarm. Have you considered whether the alarm may be interfering with how well you feel when you wake up?



You might think about using an alarm clock with a gentler alarm sound or a clock radio where you can set it to play music instead of the discordant buzz. If you can arrange for a light to come on instead of a sound, that can also be used to wake you up.

Temperature: This can affect how easily you can fall or remain asleep. Don't set the temperature higher than you need to.

What Your Doctor Asks

Your doctor will check your physical condition and ask a lot of questions.

That’s because sleeping problems need careful assessment of your symptoms to be correctly identified so that the most appropriate treatment for your condition is found.

Sometimes, changes to your lifestyle may be all that are required.

But, your doctor must try to eliminate the possibility that your sleeping problem is not linked to some serious medical condition.

Your doctor will want to know:

- How long you have been having the sleeping problems.
- If you have any significant symptoms which might indicate the presence of other medical conditions.
- If you have been using over the counter preparations to self-treat your symptoms.
- If you have recently had any significant stressful events which might have triggered your insomnia or other problem.
- Your use of stimulants such as caffeine and alcohol.
- Your usual sleeping routine.

Do you sleep at a regular time and for about the same time most nights?

Do you have trouble falling asleep?

Do you wake up frequently? If so, do you know why?

Do you snore to the extent that you wake yourself up?

Do you have any difficulty staying awake during the day, especially when you are doing repetitive tasks like driving or doing paperwork?

All these factors are important when your doctor is working out how best your condition can be treated. Many factors interact with each other.

These interactions may be hard for you or me to detect or understand. Even your doctor will need as much information as possible to make the best diagnosis and recommendation for treatment.

This demonstrates the importance of getting professional help when your insomnia or other sleeping problems continues for a period or starts to affect your health or quality of life.

Dreams



Research into why we dream and what effects that has on us is continuing.

Research indicates that we mostly dream during R.E.M. (light) sleep.

When we reach the R.E.M. sleep stage, signals are sent to the cerebral cortex which controls thinking and categorizing information.

We cannot be sure at this stage if the dreams relate to rational thinking about the information that is being processed during

R.E.M. sleep or if it is something less useful.

The base of the brain (the **pons**) sends signals to the spinal cord which stop the limbs from operating during R.E.M. sleep. When these signals are interfered with, sleepers may act out what they are dreaming about.

This may cause them to fall out of bed while dreaming about trying to catch a fish or strike their bed partner if they are dreaming about playing golf or whatever.

Myths about Sleep

Coffee and other stimulants can keep me alert.

If you have a large "sleep debt" then stimulants will only keep you awake. They won't repair the poor level of mental alertness or improve your reaction time significantly.

This myth has encouraged many people to drive when over-tired and probably resulted in many crashes and un-necessary tragedies.

A hot drink at bedtime will help me sleep.

As explained earlier, drinks are one of the main causes of poor sleep.

They cause more interruptions in your sleep to visit the toilet. After each visit, you lose the benefit from the sleep cycle you were in and have to start a new cycle again.

Drinks and foods containing caffeine, which is a stimulant, are likely to interfere with the quality of your sleep.

Important Terms

Circadian Rhythm: The Circadian Rhythms are natural patterns in the physiological processes of our human bodies. They are approximately twenty four hours in length.

Delta Wave: Slow brain waves during R.E.M. sleep and have a frequency up to four hertz. Used by researchers as an indication that the sleeper is in the light stage (R.E.M.) sleep. Some call it “Delta Rhythm”.

G.E.R. (gastroesophageal reflux) is a milder form of G.E.R.D.

G.E.R.D. (gastroesophageal reflux disorder) is when the acid in your stomach and other digestive fluids go into the esophagus and cause inflammation.

Insomnia: Is a condition where you have difficulty falling asleep or are unable to remain asleep when you normally would be able to.

Jet Lag: Is the effect felt when you change International Time Zones and your internal body clock takes a few days to adjust. Some people that work different shifts experience similar symptoms to jet lag.

R.E.M. sleep: Rapid Eye Movement sleep is the lightest stage of our sleeping cycle.

Restless Legs Syndrome: A tingling or crawling feeling in their legs which sufferers move to try to get relief.

Sleep Debt: The toll on our physical and mental well-being which we get from not getting enough sleep in amounts which allow us to have full, healthy sleep cycles. The debt will grow and the effects become more apparent until we get the required amount of healthy sleep.

Better Sleep Ahead

I hope that you will get great results from the information in my ebook so that your sleeping problems and the negative outcomes they bring to your life are reduced or even eliminated over time.

My last piece of advice, based on my experience and feedback from people that I know who have had these conditions is that you will need patience and persistence.

Because there are such a variety of problems and symptoms that vary with each person, you may have better and faster results than I have.

Sometimes, you will find something is less effective than you hoped.

But, you will be on the right track. Just being aware of your condition after your doctor has checked you will make it much easier to control its effects, even if curing that particular problem is not yet possible.

I wish your better sleep and a better life.

Neville Amis

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