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About the Author

Morris Doleman has dealt with sleep problems personally and in his family.

Morris was surprised when his doctor suggested that his symptoms might be a result of poor sleeping habits over several years.

He said, “ I had felt that something was wrong and was a bit relieved when she said it was possibly sleep-related.”

“But, it was a shock to find out that sleep debt can be a factor in the development of some serious conditions.”

Morris decided to share the information he’d found in this ebook.

“Sleep problems can affect anyone at any age and the effects can quickly start to affect the quality of our work and damage our personal relationships.”

“Many of the symptoms may seem minor and easily fixed. But, we might make the problem much worse if we put off seeing our doctor or ignore the signs entirely.”

“Our busy lifestyle and high pressure work makes greater demands on us and shrinks the time we have with our families.”

“I am not an expert. I wrote this book to share with other people how we learned to improve the sleep habits of our family and avoid the mistakes and stress which we went through before.”

“We found that everyone in the family was affected in some way by the sleep-related problems a couple of us had. And, they also affected our relationships with some of our friends and associates.”

“There are no one-size fits-all answers. I show you some things which have helped other people like us.”

“There’s a lot of theories and more research happening.”

The best time to get your questions answered and the help you, or members of your family, need is today!”

Introduction

Sleep is something which most of us tend to devalue.

But, getting an adequate, regular amount of it is a critical factor in our health, well-being and achievement in all areas of our lives!

Anyone may have sleep-related problems at some time in their life.

From babies to the elderly, lack of quality sleep is common. The consequences can be serious.

A lot of injuries and deaths on our roads and in work situations are believed to be related to sleep-deprived people becoming drowsy.

There are many reports in medical literature of them also having a higher risk of some heart problems and diabetes.

Their mental ability and sex drive may also be affected.

This does not just affect the person who cannot sleep.



All of the rest of their family will find them less responsive to them, and the situation will also probably impact on the ability of each person to cope with other pressures through their day.

The cost of dealing with medical and social problems related to sleep loss is significant.

I hope that my ebook will help you find the information and professional support to improve your sleep and your life.

Sleep Diary

What is a Sleep Diary?

A Sleep Diary is just a record of when you slept and the factors which have some effect on the quality and duration your sleep.

Why should I have a Sleep Diary?

The information in your Sleep Dairy can help you to see where you have problems with your sleep and which factors you may be able to adjust that could give you better results.

Your doctor, or sleep specialist if your have been referred to one, may also be able to use that information to help you make significant improvements in your sleep. The data may help them to recognize signs of sleep disorders earlier. Starting treatment sooner may mean less stress for you and better outcomes.

Simple is Best

Before you go to bed, list basic details of any naps you took during the day. Include any naps when you did not intend to fall asleep. They may be a signal of severe sleep deprivation which is thought to cause many traffic accidents and injuries.

Note on your daily sheet, what you drank and when. Coffee, tea and energy drinks can affect your sleep patterns.

Note anything which might affect your sleep, such as exercise sessions, large meals and snacks.

Log what time you went to sleep. Did it take long for you to get to sleep?

What time(s) you woke up and approximately how long after that you went to sleep again.

Don't update you diary during the night. That puts your focus on the diary and will interfere with getting the sleep you need.

Don't worry about possible small errors in the times. It's just an overview of

your current sleep situation.

Note your mood when you wake up. This can help you to see how different amounts of sleep affect how you feel at the start of the next day.

If you can improve how you feel when you wake up, you get a better start to your day. That will improve your interactions with your family and colleagues through the whole day.

Sleep Hints

Routine: Routines can be very effective in getting babies and small children to where they sleep well with few disturbances each night.

But, they are also important for us, whatever our age.

If you can set-up a routine for starting your night’s sleep with a consistent bedtime and waking up at a regular time through the whole week, you will find the quality of your sleep improves.

But, you will get even better results if you follow the same sleep pattern through the weekend as well.

Reduce Caffeine: Limit caffeine and similar substances, such as Guarana



that will interfere with your sleep. Caffeine will also have other negative effects.

Don't have any within two hours of bed.

Your Oasis: Bed is for resting, sleep and sex.

For many couples, it is their

best opportunity to discuss personal issues in private. Keep it low-key, if possible. You don't want to argue and then have to try to sleep together.

If you can't sleep, try a mask to keep light off your eyes. There are many commercial devices which may work for some people, but try the cheap mask first.

No TV: Remove radios, TV's and other electronic devices. People think they will help them to be more relaxed and ready for sleep. But, most games and television programs are designed to arouse your emotions and that makes it less likely that you will have an easy transition to restful sleep.

You can still have a clock-radio to wake you in the morning. Be sure it's set to a station which features easy listening music that won't jolt you from sleep too harshly.

There are researchers who suggest that the light from many devices slows production of some substances in our bodies which encourage sleep.

Snacks: Do not have any snacks in bed or just before you go to bed. Even if they don't usually affect your ability to go to sleep, they may still reduce the quality of your sleep because your body will have to start the digestion process.

Then, it will have less resources and time for essential repair work. You are also more likely to have to interrupt your sleep with extra toilet visits. Each time you wake up, you interrupt a sleep cycle and then need some time to go back into the next one.

Temperature Changes: Keep the temperature in your bedroom slightly cool. You will warm up while sleeping and the increased temperature of the room may make you uncomfortable. That could wake you up and interrupt your sleep cycle.

Encourage Sleep: You might be able to relax your body and soothe your mind with some simple mental games, or even just counting backwards from fifty to zero, so that you drift into sleep more easily.

Another tip is based on a technique used by some hypnotists. Close your eyes and mentally suggest to yourself that your shoulders are relaxing. Then, slowly work down your body, saying to yourself that your arms, then your chest and other sections are relaxing. Done smoothly, this will encourage your body to actually relax you to sleep.

Don't fight to sleep: If you have tried your best ideas for encouraging sleep and you are still wide awake after, say, half an hour, any further attempt will probably just start to stress you. Get up and sit in a comfortable chair for about ten minutes. Then, tell yourself you *need* some sleep and try your best routine again.

Power naps: They can be helpful in the short term for giving you some rest if you have a sleep debt that is affecting your work.

But, they do not address the problem of your growing sleep debt.

To reduce that, you need to:

1. Consult your doctor who will check if you may have any underlying sleep-related or other conditions and
2. Focus on possible improvements to the quality of your main sleeping session each night.

Common Sleep Problems

I’ve included three sleep problems in this section. I’ve given sleep apnea and children’s sleep problems more space later in the book.

That does not mean that any of the problems are not as important. They can all cause significant stress and other problems.

But, I believe the coverage of the problems in this section, along with the information and advice from your medical professional, will be enough for you to be able to understand and deal with them.

One of the most dangerous effects of sleep problems is occupational and driving drowsiness. This is where someone starts to drowse and causes injury to themselves or others because they are using machinery or driving a car at the time.

I emphasize this problem because it is believed to be a significant factor in many road accidents and workplace injuries.

Insomnia



Insomnia, an inability to sleep for the usual time or depth, is the most prevalent type of sleep problem.

About thirty percent of the population have episodes of insomnia from time to time.

A smaller number have the condition in a more serious form which must be reviewed so that ongoing professional treatment can

be organized. If you have insomnia in any form, get our doctor’s advice whether you need more help.

Insomnia is likely to occur near an important event like a job interview or a wedding.

The lack of sleep is likely to cause extra stress. The best answer to this sort of stress is preparation so you are confident to handle the actual event well.

If you focus on the potential problem, your stress will increase and you will lose more quality sleep. Staying longer in bed to try to get more sleep is unlikely to work until you have done what you can to prepare and build up your confidence.

After the event is successful, you can expect that your sleep pattern will return to normal.

Narcolepsy

Narcolepsy is a condition where the sufferer can instantly fall asleep even while having a discussion, eating a meal or driving a car.

The risks are obvious. Professional evaluation and treatment is essential.

Parasomnias

Parasomnias are active sleep behaviors such as sleep-walking and night-terrors (an advanced type of nightmare). They seem to be most prevalent in children. Some researchers believe there may be a genetic link because many families have a history of the condition.

If you try to wake someone during a Parasomnia episode by shouting at them, they may react violently.

A doorbell or other mechanical sound may help or get a violent reaction as well.

Some sufferers may need professional help. Some can reduce the episodes by improving the sleeping conditions.

Set a sleep routine and stick to it is good advice.

Check the bed and area around it to ensure that the sufferer cannot harm themselves or anyone else if another episode occurs.

What is Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a sleep disorder that many people continue to suffer because it is not detected by their doctor.

It causes gaps in your breathing pattern or your breaths to become less powerful while you sleep.

Some effects are minor but the condition will worsen and may cause serious problems when you become drowsy more frequently during the day. This sort of drowsiness is believed to be a factor in many car accidents and even fatalities.



Sufferers may only become aware of their sleep apnea when their partner or another family member mentions their snoring and gasping for breath.

Obstructive sleep apnea is most common. The airways sag closed or is blocked while they are asleep. This is more common with overweight people but anyone may suffer from the disorder.

A less common form of the condition is central sleep apnea where the signals from your brain which control the muscles which power your breathing are interrupted for short periods.

This mostly occurs with people with certain medical conditions or who take certain medicines. Those patients are advised about central sleep apnea by their doctor.

As well as the risk of accidents due to day-time sleepiness, sleep apnea sufferers may have increased risk of conditions like heart problems, high blood pressure and stroke.

Diagnosing Sleep Apnea

Many sufferers are never actually diagnosed and miss out on treatment which could improve their lives.

Your doctor may ask you to keep a Sleep Diary, described in a separate chapter, which they will check for anything that might indicate sleep apnea or other conditions.

This simple process will save time asking you questions which will make the whole process less stressful as well.

They will ask about your family history, especially if any have been diagnosed or shown the symptoms of sleep apnea.

Checking your throat will discover if your soft palate is large in proportion to your windpipe and may tend to block it.

Your doctor may recommend you consult a sleep specialist for further investigation.



Children get sleep apnea and other sleep disorders. Often, the doctor might only need to check with you about the family history and give them a physical examination unless you have noticed clear symptoms.

Some children may benefit from having their tonsils removed but this is less common than it used to be. Many doctors will suggest waiting to see if any oversized tissue shrinks as the child grows older.

Sleep Apnea Causes

Studies are continuing but these notes will help you understand some of the ways sleep apnea occurs.

Muscles in our throat keep the airway open so that our breath is not obstructed. These muscles relax to some extent while we sleep.

But, some people have muscles which relax too much and their breath is obstructed.

Their brain will cause them to wake up when this happens, but they will probably not know why.

A few people have tongues or tonsils which are bigger in relation to the size of their windpipe, which can cause this type of symptoms.

Some elderly people’s systems are unable to always keep their throats stiff and open wide enough when they sleep.

Sleep apnea may seem a minor problem to some sufferers but these interruptions to sleep can cause stress and encourage the development of other health problems. It should not be ignored.

Sleep Apnea Signs

Sleep apnea is one of the most common sleep disorders.

These signs are common in a person that has sleep apnea, but professional diagnosis is necessary because many of the symptoms also occur in people that are not affected by the problem.

Snoring: A person suffering from sleep apnea will often have periods of noisy, prolonged snoring. This won't happen every night or always to the same intensity.

This is likely to be first noticed by their partner or other family members.

Interrupted Breathing: This usually happens after a period of snoring. It may cause the sufferer to wake up, but they probably won't know the reason.

Dry Mouth or Throat: This can occur because of the snoring and gasping for air.

Other effects of sleep apnea may include frequent headaches when you wake in the morning and more trips to the toilet during the night.

The toilet trips and headaches can occur for various other reasons. If they keep occurring, you should mention them to your doctor so he or she can have them checked.

Treating Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a condition which requires management over a period of time. There is no quick fix.

The usual treatment options include:

Changes in lifestyle

You might be surprised how much improvement may be gained by adopting some of these changes.

Quit smoking: I know it is not easy but it has plenty of other benefits apart from reducing sleep disorders. Reducing your habit might help.

If you are overweight, your sleep apnea may improve significantly with any weight reduction you make. If you see-saw between overweight and lower weight, the stress you suffer from the up-swing is likely to be greater because of your sleep apnea.

Changes in sleeping positions: If you usually sleep on your back, try to sleep on your side as much as possible for a while. You might look at some of the special pillows which are designed to help keep you in the new position.

Some allergy medicines may help to keep nasal passages open: Check with your doctor before buying any of these preparations, because you must be sure the medicine cannot affect you negatively.

Alternative to your current prescriptions: If you are taking anything which, as a side-effect, makes you feel sleepy, ask your doctor if there is a safe alternative which does not do that.

Oral Appliances

These devices may help some sufferers. When in place, they change the resting position of your tongue and lower jaw during sleep so that your airways stay open.

They are usually provided by dentists or orthodontists. They have some endorsements.

Always tell your doctor if you have any pain or other problems when the mouthpiece is used.

C.P.A.P. Machine (Continuous Positive Airways Pressure).

This device provides a continuous gentle flow of air through a facemask to help your airways stay open. You need to be shown the proper way to use the machine. Incorrect usage can mean you get no benefit, so your money would be wasted and you become more stressed.

Your snoring may stop soon after starting the treatment but your sleep apnea won't be cured at that point. You will need to continue using your machine until your doctor says you can try not using it for a short test period.

Many people with severe sleep apnea say they are happy with the cost of their CPAP machines, but each person has to consider their particular circumstances and needs.

Surgery

Surgery to reduce the size of soft tissues or remove excess flesh may be considered in some cases.

This will probably only be done after an evaluation by a specialist.

Sleep Debt

Sleep debt is very widespread and not well understood.

It is the amount of quality sleep time which you need, above your normal daily quota, to overcome the effects on you of sleep deprivation you have had in the past.

Many people believe that the condition is inevitable because of the increasing pressures from working in the current environment.

Allowing this debt to continue to increase will have serious negative effects on us in the future.

But, we can reduce the effects in the short term and slowly lower the debt itself if we take action.

We just have to make simple changes to our daily routines.

The hard part is sticking with those changes long enough for new habits to form. It can be discouraging when some changes don't appear to have much positive effect for some time.

But, we really have no choice if we want to achieve our goals and improve our enjoyment of life.

Effects of sleep debt range from mood changes to falling asleep when driving. This type of fatigue is estimated to be a factor in many thousands of serious accidents every year.

The Signs of Sleep Debt

Forgetfulness: This is common with people who are not getting enough quality sleep. When we have frequent interruptions to normal sleep cycles, the brain is not able to produce the number of new neural pathways needed and repair any that are damaged.

Some of our memory patterns may be affected. This becomes worse because many people make excuses for their inability to use their memory well. They don't realize the importance to our self-confidence of using our memory and the impression which people get if we don't make the necessary effort.

Lack of Tolerance: Groups of people, whether families or colleagues, learn to tolerate their individual differences. But, when we are deprived of quality sleep, we tend to become less reasonable and more likely to criticize others. Over things we’d be willing to ignore if we were our usual selves.

If we pause before we respond and think more about the effects of our comments on others in the group, we will keep our lines of communication and support open.

Feeling tired all the time: This is the most obvious sign of sleep debt. The obvious tactic of taking naps during the day will not be very effective. They are likely to be too short and irregular to be of much value.



Lack of interest in socializing: When we are under pressure, we may withdraw from a lot of our usual social activities.

We justify this as being a temporary measure while we try to deal with the pressure we are under.

But, making the effort to be interested in friends and colleagues will improve our ability to overcome the emotional load. We will feel much better joining in than we could by withdrawing from our friends and trying to deal with it by ourselves.

Our friends or workmates will provide support and help us to shift our focus off our problems and restore our emotional balance more easily.

Skiping Meals: Lack of sleep increases our stress and will affect our appetite. We may skip meals and try to make up for it with snacks that are less nutritious or even bad for us.

The lack of nutritional value will affect our ability to do our work or give family members our full attention.

When we gain weight or have other effects from the junk food, our self-esteem and energy levels will become even worse.

Memory problems from Poor Sleep

I’ve included some simple tips in this book which almost anyone can use to improve their ability of their memory.

Most people will never know how good their memory is because they don’t work on using it well, but make excuses for any slips they make.

When you use you memory well, you realize how much people respect you.

A good memory is also useful in any sort of business deal.

One of the ways you can help protect the quality of your ability to store, recall and use what you have learned and experienced is to improve the quality of your sleep.

Researchers found indications that interruptions to the main sleep stages have effects on all types of memory activity.

They have not established exact cause and effect between particular sleep stages and memory processes.

Students who cram for hours the night before a hard test are likely to have poor recall of what they learned during that last long night.

A good relaxed sleep can help you to focus and recall information.

However efficient you are at understanding new information and skills, your brain will not be able to store and properly recall as much if you don’t have good sleep.

REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep, when we have most of our dreams, is essential for proper retention of some types and others seem to be processed during the deeper stages.

Theories are adjusted from time to time and it may be years before we understand the connections.

But, you can ensure the best results simply by getting relaxed sleep with as few interruptions as possible.

Simple Steps to Cut Your Sleep Debt

Focus on improving your period of quality sleep each night with the ideas in this ebook.

If you try to make big changes quickly, unless they are essential for medical reasons, you put a lot of pressure on yourself when you are in poor condition. It will be easier to get if you start by making small changes. Significant improvement can take more time that you might hope. But, this is worth whatever time it takes.

Keep using them so they become positive habits, even when there are no obvious improvements for a while.

The most effective way to reduce the impact on your sleep debt is to improve the conditions affecting your main sleep session each night.

Most sufferers need to sleep longer on a regular basis. You will not make significant improvements to the situation by having an extended sleep session each weekend.

Naps are most useful for people that are also exercising and have a well-organized night-time sleep routine. But, having naps won't be as much help for people whose diet or level of exercise is deficient.

Eat More Wisely: Start to add healthier options to your eating routine so that you have more energy to tackle whatever confronts you during the day.

Breakfast is the most important meal for people of any age.

Fruit is usually better for you than fruit juice.

Many breakfast cereals have most of the natural vitamins and minerals removed during processing and replaced in the form of additives. Some additives may not be as beneficial as eating fresh vegetables and fruit which contain these vitamins and minerals.

Read the labels and get advice from your doctor or health store.

Increase your water intake: Ordinary tap water is fine in most places. We simply don't realize how lucky we are to have it readily available.

Six or more glasses a day will help our sleep and general well-being. You don't have to drink a full glass at a time.

Free Memory Improvement!

If you are showing signs of poor memory, don't worry. Most people can improve their memory very simply.

The important thing is not to accept a poor memory function as normal unless there is a reason confirmed by your doctor.

Anyone that starts saying, “I just am bad at remembering names (or whatever)”, will develop poor memory habits. Their friends and colleagues will start to think that they are inefficient and unreliable.

It only needs a little more effort to get really good at remembering things like names. This is an easy way to move our focus outward to other people and away from our own troubles.

The people around you will appreciate your increased efforts and interest in them.

Your own self-confidence will start to improve as you get better results too.

Pay attention when someone is introduced to you. Ask them to repeat their name so you are sure to remember it. Try to associate their name with your mental image of their face.

Use their name when you speak to them so that the imprint in your subconscious will start to stick in place.

Keep Yourself Motivated

Here are some ways to keep yourself in a positive frame of mind.

Taking action on this will help you to deal with your sleep problems and maintain a good relationship with the people around you.

Look for positives in a situation: I’m not suggesting that you ignore problems. But, there is usually some aspect of any task which you can get some inspiration from.

Jumpstart your day: It easy to feel overwhelmed when you are tired at the beginning of a new work day.

We think that we need a coffee and a chat to prime us before we tackle any of their work.

But, slow starts actually un-motivate most people.

The dull but necessary tasks we all have to do often seem much harder to start after that coffee and take longer to finish.

This causes friction at work which causes stress that we carry home with us.

Start your day by doing a small but important task instead of getting a coffee and joining the social chat when people arrive.

Any small task completed will get you into a better frame of mind for the larger tasks which must be done that day.

Take Real Breaks: When you have a break, make it a real change for you physically and mentally. Otherwise, you won’t get the important benefits available to you.

Taking those breaks well away from your desk and routine work, ensure that you get mental and physical refreshment. Eating at our desks, surrounded by work papers and still getting calls and emails, or reading reports while we eat, put extra pressure on our mental reserves and can interfere with our body’s ability to digest our food properly.

Walk around for a few minutes every half-hour to maintain good circulation to your feet and move more air through your lungs. People who work on

computers or other devices for longer than that can develop the symptoms and problems associated with deep vein thrombosis – the traveller’s disease! If you bring your lunch with you, go to a park to eat it instead of staying inside.

Exercise: Most of us need to exercise more. That does not mean you have to pay for and attend gym sessions. Look for ways to add a little exercise to your everyday routine.

Walk up stairs instead of taking the elevator. If you work in a large building, walk up a couple of levels before getting the elevator for the rest of the journey.

Getting Your Baby to Sleep All Night

All parents look forward to their child being able to sleep through the night.

It is not always easy. No method will work for every child.

We are likely to react to cries from a baby, even when it is not a baby we know.



When our own baby cries, it hits us hard. Many parents become highly stressed when their best efforts to follow the advice of their doctor don't relieve the baby's stress and it continues to cry.

Frustration grows when we see or hear about other people's babies passing through this stage much quicker than our own.

We have to be careful to avoid becoming too physical with our child.

These suggestions may help. Always ask your doctor and be aware that all children are different, so some things will be more effective with some children than with others.

Controlled Crying System

This is probably one of the most popular method for getting babies to sleep, but not everyone believes the claims of the people who use and promote it.

It should only be used for children over six months of age and after discussion with your medical professional who knows your particular child's condition.

The system has strong support from parents who have used the system successfully and some researchers.

There are also many that are concerned about the possible long-term effect on babies who are brought up with the system. The opponents say that seeing their parent come to the room and then leave again without interacting with them in any way or relieving their stress may cause long-term negative effects.

An Australian study compared some six-year-olds who had similar backgrounds. Some parents used the controlled crying procedure when the children were babies and others had not.

The researchers indicated that the results supported the safety of the system. But, critics said that the group may be too small and the period was too short for the study to be definitive.

The main concerns raised are about possible long-term effects on the emotional state of the people whose parents used the controlled crying system when they were babies.

How Controlled Crying Works

There are many variations of the basic Controlled Crying system. Almost everyone that writes a book or produces a product around it, has their own variations.

The basis of the system involves letting the child cry without touching it or lifting it from the crib.

A parent still goes to the child when it cries to check it is safe, but does not

respond immediately nor pick it up.

Each time the child cries, the parent waits a little longer before responding.

This period should never be longer than fifteen minutes.

Swaddling

This has been a traditional practice in many areas of the world. It has become popular again in the United States but, like so many other practices, there are some who have serious concerns about it.

Swaddling involves wrapping the baby in a cloth or specially made pocket.

The idea is to keep them warm and safe in one spot.

Some things to check to ask your doctor about swaddling before following up the material from companies and individuals offering swaddling gear are:

1. Never lay the child face-down. This is one factor which is common in many cases of SIDS.
2. Don't wrap the child too tightly. Some experts report that the increased popularity of swaddling has brought more instance of serious hip problems where the babies have been wrapped too tightly. Many parents don't realize that their baby's hips are loose from birth until they are about four months of age. This is a way of easing the passage of the baby when it is born.

If they are wrapped while the hips are still loose, hip dysplasia damage can occur.

Be sure to get professional advice before doing any swaddling.

Other Sleeping Suggestions

Some parents set their baby’s crib next to their bed. They may remove the side nearest to them or not.

Some actually have the baby in bed with them. There are some risks like the baby may be injured or smothered under a sleeping parent.

Many parents start to get their babies to sleep through the night between six to twelve months.



Indicators that your child may be at a stage where they can adapt to sleeping through most of the night include:

If they have no conditions or concerns which require supervision through the night, you can start them on the all-night stage.

Some indicators that your child may be at a stage where they can adapt to sleeping through most of the night include:

1. The child falls asleep after you put them in their cot and only calls or cries after some hours.
2. Your baby is feeding well through the day.

Discuss this with your partner and ensure that you both feel comfortable that the time is right for this important step.

Babies don’t actually sleep through the night. They continue to wake at intervals (most adults do too) but they go back to sleep most times without making any fuss.

That’s why your baby may surprise you by crying loudly one night after days or even weeks of quiet nights. It may just be a temporary discomfort or some small change in the previous day’s routine which upset the baby’s comfort zone. The first option might just need one or two nights for baby to get back on course. The other may take much longer. Take heart that your baby has already been through the process successfully. You will get there again.

Improve Your Bedroom

The bedroom is often treated as an extension of our office or lounge and even as an extra storage area!



It should be, as far as possible, a sanctuary from the rest of the day where we can relax and let our bodies and minds recuperate.

Checking the content of your bedrooms and how they are used can help to reduce sleeping problems for all members of the family.

Choose a mattress which gives you the support you want. The degree of firmness will not usually affect your sleep much.

Even though you may not even know they occur while you sleep, your body's reactions to changes in the room temperature affect the quality of your sleep.

You may want to change the type of bedding or sleepwear you use in the winter and summer to help your body more easily deal with the different temperatures.

The importance of sleep to every part of your life means that a good mattress is an investment, not just an expense.

We should replace our mattresses at least every eight years, earlier if you feel it is no longer giving you enough support.

Lighting

Bright lights can affect your ability to get back to sleep after a trip to the bathroom or whatever.

Consider using low-wattage night lights instead of the main lighting during the night.

I use lights which switch on when movement is detected and then switch off a short time after it stops. Although they cost a little more than regular night-lights, they are worth it.

These avoid the hassle of finding the switch to turn on the light in the dark and are less trouble for young children or sick people to use.

Your Children’s Bedrooms

Children’s bedrooms may be a factor in any sleep problems which they are having.

Children may use their bedrooms for study and play because they need privacy and quiet, or no other space is available for them where they won't interfere with other people’s activities.

It's better if these activities can be accommodated in general family areas. If that's not possible, set limits on the time that entertainment devices are used.

TV programs, computers and video games can keep them energized to a level which interferes with their ability to achieve restful sleep easily.

Also, some research suggests that the light from some devices may slow the body's production of melatonin which assists the onset of sleep.

Yes, these suggestions are worth considering for you and your partner as well.

Your Diet

Research by the USA National Institute of Health in late 2011 suggested that everything we consume, the amount and timing of our meals and snacks all have some effect on our sleeping pattern and the quality of our sleep.

Here are some points to keep in mind.

High-fat foods: Avoid them if you can't do without them altogether. At least ban them within three hours of your bed time. Otherwise, they will keep your digestive system working which interferes with your sleep cycles.

That means more night-time toilet trips which reduce the time you can actually sleep. Those extra breaks start you accepting broken sleep patterns as unavoidable.

Spices: A little spice is nice. Some spices are high in antioxidants and may aid digestion.

But, spicy foods will interfere with your sleep patterns. They may increase your body temperature which will cause some discomfort and make you more likely to wake more often through the night.

Try to avoid them within four hours of going to bed.

Caffeine: Coffee, tea and energy drinks contain caffeine, or related substances such as guarana. They may also have high levels of sugars and other substances which can affect your sleep patterns. Caffeine is also in chocolate.

Decaffeinated drinks may still have low levels of caffeine or other substances introduced through the de-caffeinating process that could affect your sleep adversely. Check the label and use the Internet to find out about substances you are not sure of.



Some prescribed and over-the-counter medicines and other products contain significant amounts of caffeine. Check the labels and ask if you can get substitutes for any high-caffeine products or perhaps restrict their use to well before you start a sleep cycle.

Don't make any changes to the medication you use without your doctor's prior approval.

Warm milk and honey in moderation should have a good effect on your sleep. Both milk and honey contain *Tryptophan* which is one of the ten essential amino acids needed by our system. It's most well-known role is in the production of the nerve impulses which affect relaxation and sleep.

Some is also converted to niacin, which is a B vitamin involved with skin, digestion, serotonin production and helping your nervous system.

Serotonin is needed to make melatonin, an important factor in your sleep cycles.

Eat sufficient quantities of foods like poultry, fish and some nuts are helpful because our body does not naturally produce Tryptophan.

However, the Tryptophan will not be available until it is processed within the body. We need some carbohydrates to get the process going.

Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS)

Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) is a syndrome where you are compelled to move your legs. The feeling is “like worms inside your legs”, “stabbing pain” or “like cramp”.

Either one or both legs may be affected. People of any age may have it.

Some researchers believe there is a genetic factor as many patients have a family history of Restless Legs Syndrome.

Some prescription medicines can also relieve the symptoms but get your doctor’s approval before buying or using anything because it may affect the efficiency of other medicines you have to take.

About five percent of the North American population can expect to have Restless Legs Syndrome to some degree at some stage of their life.

Elderly people and pregnant women are among the most common sufferers though figures are not considered highly accurate. A small number of children are reported to have it but researchers believe the actual figure is higher.

Simple walking can give relief from the symptoms. Restless Legs Syndrome interferes with many people’s sleep because of the physical symptoms and the need to walk for several minutes to achieve relief.

This can lead to insomnia which may persist even after the Restless Legs Syndrome goes away.

Some other ways to relieve symptoms which help some patients include reducing alcohol and nicotine use or have other conditions successfully treated.

There seems to be a link between Restless Legs Syndrome and iron deficiency. Ask if you need to be tested for that deficiency when you see your doctor.

The exact cause is still being investigated so a cure is probably years away.

Does Poor Sleep Increase Your Weight?

Some people believe that having a poor sleep pattern will make it harder to lose weight and keep it off.

The suggestion is that adults who regularly sleep less than six hours a night are inclined to gain weight.

The theory is that your lower sleep level will cause you to feel discouraged. Then, you will eat more “comfort” foods which are a prime factor in weight gain for many people.

Also, the shorter sleep time will not allow the body to do its full repair and replenish cycles.

Unless you focus on keeping yourself motivated, you will reduce the amount of exercise and interaction with other people you do.

This all seems logical. But, there is no rule that you have to let this mindset take you over.

Start with adjusting your poor sleep pattern or work on those things which are causing it.

If you have a weight loss target, break it into small segments and celebrate each small step to your target.

Occupation-related Sleep Problems

Many types of work put pressure on our ability to maintain a healthy sleeping routine.

Shift-workers of all types suffer because of the changes to their hours and the effects of noises in the area around their bedrooms.

People like Air Traffic Controllers and flight crews travelling between countries are affected by changes to their internal clocks. Some of these effects can be modified to some degree by routines which include changing sleeping patterns to match the next destination, using bright lights when working and making sleeping areas very dark.

Some people find doses of melatonin helpful, subject to their doctor’s prior approval.

Rotating shifts from early to late may help with the person’s adjustment better than if they have to adjust backward.

Resources

Helpguide.org

<http://www.helpguide.org/> An independent, registered charity which is a resource for independent information about medical matters. The founders started helpguide.org after their daughter died from effects of anti-depressant drugs which were rated as safe at the time.

PubMed

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>

(From their Website) PubMed comprises more than 22 million citations for biomedical literature from MEDLINE, life science journals, and online books. Citations may include links to full-text content from PubMed Central and publisher web sites.

Read the Help manual which is linked from that page before do any research on this site.

Centre for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/sleep/>

Useful information on sleep disorders. It confirms the importance of good sleep habits as a factor in promoting better health and reducing chronic disease in the general population.

The Better Health Channel

<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/>

A site provided by the Government of the State of Victoria in Australia. Provides a wide range of information on health issues and healthy living. Factsheets and videos on many topics.

Good Night

Thank you for buying my book.

I hope that the tips and strategies will help you get better rest and a happier lifestyle for you and all members of your family.

Remember that the quest for better sleep is ongoing.

There are always things happening in our lives which put pressure on us.

Using these ideas has helped me sleep better and I know they will help you as well.

Morris Doleman

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