# THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEPING AND GOOD SLEEP HYGIENE

TRUE BALANCE
NATUROPATHY

## Why is sleep important?

Sleep is essential in our lives and helps our brain and body to recover from everything we do throughout the day. Sleep plays a crucial role in maintaining good health and wellbeing throughout your life.

## We don't know exactly why we sleep but we know sleep is essential for a number of reasons:

- The body undergoes essential maintenance whilst sleeping such as the growth and repair of tissues, bones, muscles and blood vessels.
- It also helps to regulate hormones which control appetite and hunger.
- During sleep the brain processes the day's experiences and thoughts, forms memories and stores information.
- Resets connections between brain cells and clears damaged proteins and waste from the brain.
- Poor sleep can demolish the immune system and increases the risk of diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease and cancer.
- Lack of sleep can affect mental activities such as learning, mental processing, judgement and the ability to focus and complete tasks.
- Poor sleep can also affect your mood and increase stress, affecting your relationships and may sometimes lead to anxiety or depression.

## How much sleep do we need?

Most adults need between 7 to 9 hours. However, some people need more and some people need less. Young people need between 10 to 11 hours whereas people over 65 may need less than 7 hours. What's important is to find out how many hours do you need to wake up feeling refreshed and alert. Instead of focusing on the number of hours, focus on the quality.



## The sleep cycle

Our sleep is not uniform; it goes through 4 individual stages that form the sleep cycle and each progressing towards a deeper sleep.

Stage 1 and 2 also called N1 or NREM 1 and N2 or NREM 2, are the light phases of sleep and a person can be disturbed easily.

Stage 3 also called N3 or NREM3, this is deep sleep and it's harder to wake someone up. **This is the critical stage for recovery, restoration and growth. This stage also boosts the immune system and other body processes.**

Stage 4 also known as REM (Rapid Eye Movement), during this sleep brain activity starts picking up nearing the levels of when you are awake. This stage is known for its most vivid dreams. This stage is essential to cognitive functions like creativity, learning and memory.

# Sleep hygiene tips

Focus on a few at a time

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Sleep is not uniform and over the course of the night your total sleep is made up of several rounds of the sleep cycle. A full night sleep will include 5 to 6 cycles. Developing a good sleep hygiene will help you to have a healthy cycle and wake up refresh.

## KEEP YOUR OWN ROUTINE

Try to stick to the same sleeping and waking up times. Create your own nightly ritual, unwind an hour before going to bed, take a milky drink or calming tea, listen to relaxing music, meditate, try breathing exercises or have a warm bath with Epson salts and essential oils like lavender.

## CREATE A RESTFUL ENVIRONMENT

Your bedroom should be quiet, peaceful and dark and cool (Between 16 – 18 °C. Do not use your bedroom for other activities like watching TV, working or exercise. Keep your room for sleeping and sex.

## REDUCE TECHNOLOGY (BLUE LIGHT)

Avoid using phones, tablets, computers and televisions at least an hour before going to bed. Chronic exposure to blue light at night can lower the production of melatonin, our sleep promoting hormone.

## BE MINDFUL OF CAFFEINE AND OTHER STIMULANTS

Refrain from consuming coffee, coke and other soft and energy drinks, tea and chocolate for at least 4 to 6 hours before going to bed. Such stimulants will interfere with the ability to sleep preventing deep sleep. Try caffeine free like chamomile, peppermint or valerian tea as a calming alternative. In addition, nicotine is a stimulant and interferes with sleep, taking longer for you to fall asleep and causing sleep disruption.

## BE MINDFUL OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Alcohol may make you feel sleepy but interferes with the quality of sleep. Avoid drinking alcohol 4 to 6 hours before sleep.

## BE MINDFUL OF COPIOUS MEALS

Large meals will force your digestion to keep working disturbing your sleep. Have a light meal which ideally should include fish, turkey, lentils, beans, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds or oats. These foods are rich in tryptophan, an amino acid which promotes sleep.

## EXERCISE REGULARLY

Exercising during the day can help you have a good night sleep. Vigorous and stimulating exercise like running, HIT, football, etc. should be finalised at least 2 hours before bedtime.

## SPEND TIME OUTDOORS

Try taking as much natural daylight as possible, at least 30 minutes each day and reduce it in the evenings by dimming the lights. This will help to reset your circadian rhythm, your body's natural rhythm.

## AVOID OR LIMIT NAPS DURING THE DAY

Taking a nap in the afternoon/ evening will affect the quality of your night sleep. If you nap this should not be longer than 30 minutes. Staying awake during the day will help you to fall asleep at night.

## REDUCE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS & ANXIETY

Avoid judging yourself for not being able to sleep. Use positive affirmations and accept any amount of sleep is fine. Try journaling any negative thoughts or try meditation. If you can't sleep, leave your room, go to another room, and do a relaxing activity like reading and return when you feel sleepy.

**These simple steps are a great start, but your body is unique. If you're ready for a plan made just for you, book your complimentary 20 minute discovery call and let's find out what's really draining your energy**