

Get your sleep by Mike DeCinti

While watching the Discovery Health Channel the other day I came across a program about living longer and living healthy. It was hosted by Dr. Mehmet Oz, who has become somewhat of a “celebrity” doctor through his appearances on Oprah, and he said something that really caught my attention. He said that a person would die quicker from a lack of sleep than a lack of food. Now I would hope that no one reading this article would have to deal with either of these situations, but it is safe to say that a majority of you are not getting the proper amount of sleep. It may be issues you are dealing with at home or at work that actually limits the amount of time you have to sleep, or perhaps you are like the 40 million Americans who suffer from sleep disorders like insomnia or sleep apnea.

If it is the latter, than it is important that you speak with your primary healthcare provider about some options to help you overcome your sleep disorder, but if it is the former, than you need to work out a schedule and a program to make sure you get the proper amount of sleep each night. Sleep is just as important as eating the right foods and getting the right amount of exercise. Here are some tips that might help you get the needed 7-8 hours of sleep you need.

- Unwind and relax before bedtime. Instead of watching TV, try reading a book.
- Take a hot bath before bedtime. The hot water will help you relax, and the increase in body temperature may help you fall asleep.
- Maintain a consistent bedtime. This will help your body get into a constant sleep rhythm. Try to go to bed at the same time and wake at the same time every day.
- Avoid fluids before bedtime. Fluid intake will increase your chances of waking up during the night.
- Avoid sugar before bedtime. High blood sugar can cause insomnia. A high-protein snack a few hours before bedtime may help you sleep; the amino acid tryptophan, found in meats as well as yogurt, cottage cheese, and peanuts, can have a calming effect and help you sleep.
- Listen to “white noise” in your bedroom like a soothing sound produced by a fan or air purifier or purchase an inexpensive noise machine.
- Exercise regularly. Exercise is one of the best treatments for insomnia. Just don’t do it right before you plan on sleeping.
- Avoid alcohol before bedtime. While it may help you pass out, alcohol deprives you of deep, restorative sleep, which helps keep our immune system working well.
- Avoid caffeine and nicotine. Caffeine and nicotine are both stimulants.

- Lose weight if you are overweight. Obesity increases the risk of sleep apnea.
- Wear socks to bed. Warm feet equal better sleep.
- Avoid foods to which you are sensitive. Digestive problems often interrupt sleep.
- Sleep in total darkness. Even a small amount of light can disrupt your sleep.
- Maintain a cool temperature in your room.
- Invest in a comfortable mattress.

Now it is safe to say that a lot of you probably feel like you just can't find the time to get 7-8 hours of sleep a night, but like any part of a healthy living program, whether it's your daily exercises or proper nutrition, you have to work hard to make your program successful, and one of those things you need to start planning, is sleep. And the more sleep you get, the more successful the rest of your program will become.

Ironman Update

As some of you know I am training for an Ironman triathlon while trying to raise money for women in Robeson County to receive FREE screening mammograms, for those who do not have insurance and can not afford them. I am 192 days away, and I still have a lot of work to do, both in my training and my fund raising. I would like to ask all of you to visit my website at www.lraxray.com/ironmike and please consider becoming a sponsor and helping these women who desperately need our help.

I would also like to recognize our current sponsors and thank them for their support. Lumberton Radiological Associates; Mr. Collie Coleman; Biggs Park Mall; Ms. Barbara McNair Mitchell, Joan & Woodberry Bowen; Lynn & Sandy Waterkotte. Thank You!

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