

Educationals – For patients

Why Do You Need Sleep & Tips For A Good Night's Sleep.

The Importance of Sleep

Sleep is essential for normal functioning of the body and brain. Getting a good night's sleep can be just as important to your physical well being as getting enough food and exercise. The Charak Samhita, a 5000 year old essay describes sleep as essential for youthful, health and long life.

Research has shown that not getting enough sleep causes day times sleepiness and affects quality of work. Restful and proper sleep refreshes, rejuvenates and brings happiness and good health.

What is Insomnia?

Insomnia is the feeling of not having slept well or long enough. A person with insomnia has frequent trouble falling asleep (taking more than 30 minutes) and/or awakening frequently during the night or waking up early and being unable to go back to sleep.

Tips for Restful Sleep

To overcome insomnia and get restful sleep you need to follow 'Sleep Hygiene' i.e. good sleep habits

- Establish a regular bedtime and wake-up time and stick to them even on weekends and holidays
- Avoid taking naps, especially in the afternoon
- Exercise regularly during the day
- Keep bedroom comfortable, dark and quite while sleeping
- Use the bed only for sleep and sex and not for reading or watching television
- Avoid caffeine, cigarettes and alcohol

- Read something light or entertaining just before you go to bed, to get your mind off the day's troubles
- Try not to focus on falling asleep, for example by "clock watching"
- If insomnia persists speak to your doctor

Relaxation & Deep Breathing for Good Sleep

- Lie on your back.
- Slowly relax your body, starting with your feet and moving through every part of your body until you have reached your face and your head.
- Do a quick check to see if you have missed any place. If so, relax it.
- Slowly begin to inhale, first filling your lower belly, then your stomach area, and then your chest and the top of your lungs almost up to your shoulders. Hold for a second or two, then begin to exhale. Empty the very bottom of your lungs first, then the middle, then finally the top.
- Continue this breathing for 4 or 5 minutes. Don't force your breathing. Just do it in a relaxed peaceful manner.
- After a while, imagine that you are resting on a warm, gentle ocean. The sun is shining peacefully on your body. Imagine that you rise on the gentle swells of the water as you inhale, and that you slowly descend as you exhale.
- Continue this relaxing breathing as long as you wish (hopefully until you fall asleep).

Common Causes of Insomnia

Insomnia can be caused by a variety of reasons. The most common causes are

- Acute stress such as hospitalization or illness of a relative
- Health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, hypothyroidism, pain and asthma
- Arthritis causes joint pain and stiffness, making it hard to sleep
- Work stress, anxiety or depression
- Use of caffeine, alcohol

- Poor sleep habits, including going to bed at different times at night