

How to get a good night's sleep

Sleep deprivation is a potent deterrent to healing. In fact, getting a 'good nights sleep' is arguably the most important ingredient to good health, along with adequate hydration and the like. Too many patients are taking sleep aids and still not feeling rested in the morning. The key is to let the body sleep, not force it to sleep. There is nothing like natural sleep. Medication induced rest just isn't the same.

The primary reason that most patients don't sleep is dysautonomia (dysfunction to the regulatory branch of the nervous system), but other causes include hormonal imbalances, nutritional deficiencies, pain and digestive problems. Each of these must be diagnosed and addressed by your Total Body Modification (TBM) practitioner and other professionals, as needed. However, if direct efforts are not made to re-establish the circadian sleep cycle or daily sleep rhythm, addressing the causes of poor sleep may be insufficient. The following recommendations are to help you do just that. They should be followed to re-establish and maintain healthy sleep and a consistent circadian rhythm.

Sleep in the dark: Completely darken your room. This includes turning off or covering light sources with electrical tape (e.g. cell phones, alarm clocks, smoke alarms, DVD players, televisions) and reducing light that peaks through the windows and doors. Feel free to wear a light-blocking sleep mask. If you need a light to go to the bathroom, grab your cell phone and turn it on to light your way. Make sure, however, that the cell phone is at least four feet away from you body during the night.

Minimize sounds: Reduce noise interference as much as possible throughout the night. If necessary, use noise-reducing ear plugs. A third option is soothing music or 'white noise' generators to minimize disrupting sounds. If you have a partner whose sounds are waking you, you may want to sleep alone. Once you are sleeping regularly you may be able to return to sleeping together normally.

Go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day: Choose an approximate time that will work every night to fall asleep and a time every morning to wake up and stick to it! Only go to bed when you're tired though. If you wake up before your designated time and can't get back to sleep, get out of bed. If you stay in bed it will work against developing a healthy sleep pattern. Here are two exercises you can do to help improve your sleep.

1. At bedtime: To activate your bodies sleep mechanism rub both mastoid bones (the bumps just behind the ears) until you feel a 'wave of sleepiness.' This usually occurs in 10 to 15 seconds. If, after 90 seconds it doesn't occur, it probably won't help and you need to look at calming your body and/or your mind down through reading, stretching, sexual intimacy, conscious breathing or meditation. Rub the mastoid bones each night at the time you chose as your bedtime until you find your body's rhythm has adjusted. Do this anytime you lie down and are finding it difficult to go to sleep. Also do this if you wake during the night and are having difficulty going back to sleep.

2. Upon arising at your desired wake-up time: To program your body's wakefulness time, rub the Spleen 21 point (left rib cage halfway between the armpit and the bottom of the rib cage) for 30 seconds. Immediately following, rub both ears beginning at the bottom and working toward the top as if you were trying to unfurl or flatten the ears with the thumb on the back of the ear and the index finger rubbing backward on the front. Do one pass up and one down. NOTE: This also works with programming infants sleep cycles.

Avoid all stimulants and stimulating activities after dinner time or approximately 7:00pm:

This includes sugary foods, caffeine, nicotine, medications and supplements that have stimulating ingredients, bright lights, arguments, aggressive physical activity, watching television, using the computer, thrilling novels and the like. Also be sure to avoid using a cordless or cellular phone. An ear piece that is connected to the phone (not Bluetooth) is permissible.

Get outside. Expose your body to sunlight for at least a few minutes every day.

Be active. Maintain at least one hour of brisk physical activity every day, based on your current fitness level.

- Dr Kevin Millet: President and Principal Instructor, Total Body Modification