

Extreme Wellness! 6 WEEKS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL WELLNESS

With Nicole Carter, Med



Sleep for Stress and Hormone Balance

Somewhere along the line, people have come under the impression that the more we move, the more energy we expend, the less we sleep the better. Enter boutique coffee and energy drinks consumed all day long! What we failed to realize during the quest for an amped up day, are the consequences on our sleeping at night. Not only does excessive caffeine result in greater cortisol levels, but it also interrupts sleep patterns even hours later. Elevated cortisol increases inflammation, increases blood sugar, increases insulin, and weakens adrenal glands that produce other hormones. It's a ripple effect that begins with stress and lack of sleep. Some of the associated diseases with elevated cortisol include loss of muscle and bone, weakened immune function, digestive dysfunction and slowed healing and cell regeneration.

Sleep is critical for our natural body functions. It's a time for the body to reset, detoxify, rebuild and generate new tissues and muscle fibers. Here are a few benefits of a good nights sleep.

Sleep May Help You Lose Weight

Researchers have also found that people who sleep less than seven hours per night are more likely to be overweight or obese. It is thought that the lack of sleep impacts the balance of hormones in the body that affect appetite. The hormones ghrelin and leptin, important for the regulation of appetite, have been found to be disrupted by lack of sleep. While doctors have long known that many hormones are affected by sleep, it wasn't until recently that appetite entered the picture. Doctors say that both leptin and ghrelin can influence our appetite. And studies show that production of both may be influenced by how much or how little we sleep.



This is often evident when a sleepless night is followed by a day when no matter what you ate you never felt full or satisfied.

Sleep May Prevent Cancer

People working the late shift have a higher risk for breast and colon cancer. Researchers believe this link is caused by differing levels of melatonin in people who are exposed to light at night. Light exposure reduces the level of melatonin, a hormone that both makes us sleepy and is thought to protect against cancer. Melatonin appears to suppress the growth of tumors. Be sure that your bedroom is dark to help your body produce the melatonin it needs.

Sleep Reduces Stress

When your body is sleep deficient, it goes into a state of stress. The body's functions are put on high alert, which causes an increase in blood pressure and a production of stress hormones. Higher blood pressure increases your risk for heart attacks and strokes. The stress hormones also, unfortunately, make it harder for you to sleep. Learn relaxation techniques to counter the effects of stress. There are also stress reduction techniques for sleep.

Sleep Reduces Inflammation

The increase in stress hormones raises the level of inflammation in your body, also creating more risk for heart-related conditions, as well as cancer and diabetes. Inflammation is thought to one of the causes of the deterioration of your body as you age.

Sleep Bolsters Your Memory

Researchers do not fully understand why we sleep and dream, but a process called memory consolidation occurs during sleep. While your body may be resting, your brain is busy processing your day, making connections between events, sensory input,

feelings and memories. Your dreams and deep sleep are an important time for your brain to make memories and links. Getting more quality sleep will help you remember and process things better.

Sleep Keeps Your Heart Healthy

Heart attacks and strokes are more common during the early morning hours. This fact may be explained by the way sleep interacts with the blood vessels. Lack of sleep has been associated with worsening of blood pressure and cholesterol, all risk factors for heart disease and stroke. Your heart will be healthier if you get between 7 and 9 hours of sleep each night.

Naps Make You Smarter

Napping during the day is not only an effective and refreshing alternative to caffeine, it can also protect your health and make you more productive. A study of 24,000 Greek adults showed that people who napped several times a week had a lower risk for dying from heart disease. People who nap at work have much lower levels of stress. Napping also improves memory, cognitive function and mood.

Sleep May Reduce Your Risk for Depression

Sleep impacts many of the chemicals in your body, including serotonin. People with a deficiency in serotonin are more likely to suffer from depression. You can help to prevent depression by making sure you are getting the right amount of sleep, between 7 and 9 hours each night.

Sleep Helps the Body Make Repairs

Sleep is a time for your body to repair damage caused by stress, ultraviolet rays and other harmful exposures. Your cells produce more protein while you are sleeping. These protein molecules form the building blocks for cells, allowing them to repair damage.