

## “Value of sleep”

We should pay more attention to sleep and its good effects and benefits as we spend almost 1/3 of our life doing it! However, sleep can be of different qualities for different people - restful and peaceful for some and harder to get for others. If we study sleep and the benefits it provides, we can improve our sleep and obtain more of its rewards. The bottom line is we need to treat it with respect as something we really need – like air and water, and not just as a “side note” or something we will get when we can.

Sleep is a time of growth and rejuvenation of the immune, skeletal, nervous, and muscular systems. It is also a time for our brains to process information gained during the day, convert memory from short to longer term, and keep our emotions in proper balance.

Sleep is divided into two types: Rapid Eye Movement (REM) and Non Rapid Eye Movement (NREM). You need both types, and you will cycle in and out of the two types during an average night. NREM sleep usually comes first as you relax and become unconscious. The average adult goes into REM sleep about every 90 minutes. While the exact reason for REM is not completely known, we do know that without it you will not experience all the benefits of sleep. People deprived of REM sleep find it harder to learn complex tasks, their memory was affected, and they became more irritable, emotionally fragile, and depressed.

In our society it has become too easy to turn to medicines for answers, when establishing healthy habits is much more beneficial. The problem with these medicines is that if you use them, they often do work very well. In fact, they work so well that you want to use them again, and again, and again....and before you know it, you cannot sleep *without* them, and are now dependent on a pill for sleep. I always caution people to use these drugs occasionally and not every night.

Try to establish good sleep habits and a routine. Settle yourself and your environment down as the evening progresses; don't do anything to cause anxiety or stress, if you can help it. Eating earlier in the evening can also help settle you down. Turn down the house lighting, and make sure the area you're sleeping in is as quiet as possible. Watch a little TV or read a book before sleep – whatever suits you as long as it tends to have a calming effect. Studies show that the average adult needs between 7 and 9 hours of sleep per day.

Try to pay more attention and respect to the benefits of a good night's sleep. Talk to your Provider if you are having trouble. If you sleep well, you will know why an Irish proverb said - “A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor's book.”