

## Don't Underestimate the Power of Sleep

December 2015

I am certain that through the Healthy St. Pete forum you have and will continue to learn plenty about the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity. What may often be overlooked but is no less significant is the value of sleep to the vitality of our lives. In fact, we are such amazingly built organisms that even in our sleep we are capable of doing wonders for our own health and wellbeing.

It is believed that 'insomnia', the general term used to describe an inability to fall asleep or stay asleep, is one of the major but often overlooked determinants of both domestic and global illness from heart disease, obesity and stroke to autoimmune disorders and mental illness. It is no surprise then that adults are encouraged to get between 8-10 hours of uninterrupted sleep to promote wellness and prevent disease. Do you realize then that sleeping for this amount of time over the course of one's lifetime would take up roughly 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of his or her life? While many may find this fact to be in conflict with the demands of our every day lives (socially and professionally) and a nearly impossible goal to achieve, sleep may be one of the best investments to your own wellness that you may ever make.

Let's not delay then and provide you with some tips to help you restore healthy sleep habits in your own life.

- 1.) Go to bed at the same time each day and wake up at the same time.
- 2.) Aim for regular exercise, preferably in the morning but no later than 4-5 hours before bedtime.
- 3.) Keep the bedroom quiet, cool and dark when sleeping. No television, cell phone use or laptops allowed in the hour preceding bed or within the bedroom.
- 4.) Remove electrical devices from your bed stand when sleeping as the electromagnetic waves of such devices have been shown to reduce sleep-inducing hormones like melatonin.
- 5.) Avoid caffeine in the evening (coffee, tea, chocolate, sodas) and do not use alcohol to assist with sleep.

Lastly, if you lie in bed awake for more than 10-15 minutes frustrated as the minute hands pass you by, get up, go to a dimly lit room, read and return to bed to try again. Repeat as many times as necessary until you are sound asleep.

There are many contributing factors that affect one's sleep from pre-existing illness and prescription medication use to lifestyle and nutritional habits. Though some sleep disturbances are only minor, short lived and easily treatable, others may require both pharmacological and non-medicated modes to treat. If you are unhappy with the quality of your sleep or the perceived energy in your day-to-day lives while awake, do not delay seeking medical attention. Sleeping may be the best prescription to health that you have been missing.

To your health always,

The Drs. Wojnowich

--There are many sleep related articles online for additional information. You may want to start here:

[https://www.fammed.wisc.edu/sites/default/files//webfm-uploads/documents/outreach/im/handout\\_sleep.pdf](https://www.fammed.wisc.edu/sites/default/files//webfm-uploads/documents/outreach/im/handout_sleep.pdf)