

Well Being

Stillpoint Rehabilitation & Wellness, LLC

Sleep: The Magic Elixir

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Physical Medicine

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Sleep problems are being blamed for everything from cardiovascular disease and diabetes to depression, obesity and wrinkles. Sleep centers have mushroomed because of this.

According to researchers the most common reason for poor sleep is anxiety and stress. Other causes especially as we age, include painful joints, hot flashes, prostate enlargement, inactivity, lack of regular exposure to sunlight (which regulates sleep/wake cycle). Sleep apnea and gastroesophageal reflux are increasingly common causes of sleep disturbance.

Even a single night without adequate sleep can cause cognitive slowing and mood changes.

If you have pain anywhere, lack of sleep makes it worse.

Sleep loss leads to weight gain because it

can affect the levels of the hormones leptin, ghrelin and cortisol which regulate the appetite, resulting in heightened appetite and cravings.

Over the course of the night, your body should ideally go through five sleep cycles, each lasting about 90 minutes, hence the recommendation for at least 7.5 hours of sleep per night. Each sleep cycle consists of five stages.

Stages 1 & 2 are light sleep where your breathing and heart rate slow and muscles relax. You are easily roused.

Stage 3&4 are the deep delta sleep where further heart rate slowing and muscle relaxation take place. Healing, repair and tissue regeneration occur in this stage

Stage 5 is where rapid eye movement (REM) occurs. This is when you store memories, process

information, restore your nervous system and dream most vividly.

The deeper stages of sleep are the most beneficial but also the most commonly disturbed.

For the healthiest sleep:

Go to bed and get up at the same time each day, even on weekends.

Keep a pad and pen at the bedside and write your worries for another time.

Try deep belly breathing or count backward from 300 by threes if you awake at night.

Avoid caffeine after 3pm and limit fluids in the evening to avoid nocturia.

Whatever it takes, make the time for restful restorative sleep.

If you are not sleeping well, make it a top priority to find out why. Your health depends on it.

It is not the strongest of the species that survives,

nor the most intelligent that survives.

It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.

Charles Darwin

How to Handle Flu Season

According to Woodson Merrell, MD who is Chairman of the Integrative Medicine Department at Beth Israel Medical Center, you can tell you have the flu and not a cold when your symptoms include fever, fatigue, stomach upset, a bad headache, poor appetite, and/or a dry cough. Patients describe feeling like they have been run over by a truck. In preparation for flu season, he advises that you keep a box of Oscillococinum (a homeopathic remedy known to shorten flu duration) and herbs or medicinal mushrooms to fortify your immune system in your home. In some cases, you may benefit from having a prescription for Tamiflu available. One of the key ingredients used to make Tamiflu is the spice Star anise, a plant native to Asia, which yields shikimic acid when proc-

essed. While not a full cure, it is known to shorten the duration of symptoms. All of these remedies should be started within 48 hours of symptom onset. It is also important to stay home and rest since, unlike with the common cold, the more you try to move around, the worse you will feel. Drink fluids, eat moderately and take Tylenol or ibuprofen if necessary to relieve muscular pain or headaches. Remember that it may take up to four weeks to fully recover. If you are not getting gradually better, see your doctor since other illnesses like mononucleosis, Lyme disease, salmonella poisoning and others can mimic the flu.

As usual, keeping your hands clean at all times is a first-line defense against spreading colds and flu as

is covering your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze and getting out of the line of fire when others do so.

As to flu shots, there are varying opinions on what the risk/benefit ratio is for any particular person. Speak with someone who is knowledgeable or research the topic on reputable websites to make your decision.

It has been my observation that if you have been eating well, exercising and practicing stress-reduction techniques throughout the year, you increase your chances of avoiding seasonal illnesses.

If you do get sick, practice extreme self-care and surrender to the temporary disruption in your routine.

Your Wrist Bone is Connected to... Everything

There are more than 200 muscles in the human body and none of them works alone. With every movement, your brain organizes your muscles according to specific patterns which can be affected by a number of factors.

Because of the interconnectivity of the musculoskeletal system, a dysfunction in one part of the body can cause trouble in another part.

Someone may complain of pain in their wrist for instance, which may be related muscle strain in the forearm muscles. The forearm muscles may be restricted because the

shoulder is tight and stiff. The shoulder may be tight because the scapula is being pulled out of alignment because the neck and upper back are slung forward. This may be caused by lower back muscles which have become dysfunctional because the abdominal muscles are weak and the hip flexor muscles are contracted.

These patterns may take many years to develop and most people will ignore the tightness, twinges and discomforts in their bodies or accept this as part of the "aging" process.

Part of the diagnostic process in such cases is determining whether it is the joint, muscle, ligament, tendon, nerve or bone that is the pain generator as well as whether it is the primary or secondary issue.

The goal is to treat the troubling symptoms AND the underlying cause.

The best preventive strategy is to avoid holding your body in one fixed position for too long. Tune in and scan your body periodically and see where the tightness is. Shake it out, breathe into it and release. Repeat.