



CENTERSTONE

Wellness Program

Sleep More to Weigh Less!

Can sleep really fight weight gain? Is there such a thing as a sleep diet? No, not quite. But an amazing study of 68,000 women conducted at Harvard Medical School reveals that women who sleep five hours a night are 32 percent more likely to gain 30 pounds or more as they get older than women who sleep seven hours or more. This 16-year study revealed that even when the women who slept longer ate more, they still gained less than the women who slept less.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, 20 million women are tossing and turning on a nightly basis. In addition to sleep disorders such as sleep apnea and restless leg syndrome, there are five common reasons we don't get enough sleep. Here are some simple solutions to combat these obstacles, helping you get more sleep and live a healthier life:

We ignore the warning signs

The first step toward getting a good night's sleep is finding out exactly how sleep-deprived you really are and admit the importance of sleep. Do you find yourself dozing off while sitting and reading, watching TV or while in your car and stopped for a few minutes? These are important warning signs: you are not getting enough sleep.

A simply solution is to be aware of your sleepiness patterns for one week and slow down long enough to realize what activities are keeping you so busy.

Living in 24/7 Culture

Living in a culture that is always "on", lack of sleep has become a way of life. A whopping 60 percent of women rarely get a good night's sleep. Our society operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with an increasing demand on our ability to think more creatively and produce more in less time. What on earth would we do if we couldn't download a movie at 1:00 AM or go online to check our bank statement at 2:00 AM or order a pizza online at midnight? Life would be tough. Blackberries, cell phones and other interactive technologies keep us informed, connected, updated and available around the clock. These may seem helpful but are they all necessary all the time?

One solution is to turn off everything with an "on" mode before going to bed. Don't check your email right before bed. Don't feel guilty when you turn your cell phone off. I doubt the world will crumble if we cannot be reached for something in the middle of the night.

Worry, worry, worry

Stress and worry are common reasons for keeping us up at night. We worry about work, kids, relationships, friends, parents, bills, weight and the latest political polls. We know this worry is fruitless, but we do it anyway.

One solution is to put a “worry book” beside your bed. When you wake up and start worrying, jot down everything you’re worrying about and any strategies you’ve thought of that may solve those problems. Then close the book, turn out the light and go back to sleep. Your worries will be there waiting for you in the morning. You could also take time a couple of hours before going to bed to sit down and list all of the issues, problems and current concerns in your life. Next to each item, write a possible solution or plan, then put your list aside as you transition into a peaceful evening.

Having a restless bed partner

Sleep loss can kill a relationship, especially if your spouse is causing the problem. Research has found that sleep deprivation fractures brain mechanisms that tame our emotional responses to stressors. In other words, once provoked by your spouse after sleep deprivation, there is no guarantee we will play nice. Snoring, frequent movement, even the traditional war for covers, can cause one or the other spouse to lose much-needed sleep.

There are a *number of solutions* for handling these problems, such as talking to your partner and emphasizing that it is *our* problem, while avoiding personal criticism. You can encourage him or her to get help from the family doctor or a sleep specialist. Try sleeping props, such as eye masks, ear plugs or white-noise machines. And lastly, if the problem is long-term and unrelenting, consider twin beds or separate rooms.

Dealing with illness, depression and grief

Physical and mental maladies not only affect our waking hours, but also challenge our ability to rest and sleep. The most constant impediments to sleep are allergies, illness, pain and depression. Unresolved grief and loss can trigger circular thinking, which keeps the mind engaged when the body wants to rest. All of these problems can wake you throughout the night or cause you to wake up—and stay awake—before dawn, preventing you from getting the recuperative rest you need to face the next day.

There are solutions, such as nasal sprays and OTC decongestants and showering with eucalyptus for allergies. Cancer patients report that filling their mind with positive sleep-inducing images, such as a funny movie or a peaceful book, before bed is helpful. Exercise and proper medication are common treatment recommendations that encourage sleep. Connecting with friends and family, reaching out to others and even asking for prayer can greatly diminish those lonely, pain-filled sleepless nights.

No matter the cause, seek solutions for your sleepless nights today, and watch your waistline shrink as all aspects of your health will improve!

Contact Centerstone at (615) 460- HELP (4357).

About Centerstone

Centerstone (www.centerstone.org), a not-for-profit organization, is the nation's largest provider of community-based behavioral healthcare. With a history that spans over fifty years, Centerstone provides a full range of behavioral health and related educational services to more than 69,000 individuals of all ages and their families annually. Children, adolescents, adults, seniors, and families all receive help from a multitude of different programs in more than 120 facilities and 150 partnership locations in Tennessee and Indiana. Centerstone is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) in Tennessee and The Joint Commission in Indiana. For more information about Centerstone, please call toll free at (888) 291-4357.

About Susan Gillpatrick, MEd, LPC, CTS

Susan Gillpatrick, Centerstone Crisis Management Specialist, primarily works in the field with clients in critical incident response situations, and in Centerstone's wellness trainings and presentations. She is also responsible for planning and implementing marketing and growth strategies for Centerstone's Crisis Management Strategies.

In recent years, Ms. Gillpatrick worked for the Shelby County Government Victims Assistance Center in Memphis. There, she co-developed a model program for the state of Tennessee entitled, "Homicide Response." Her work in this area received the 2000 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

Ms. Gillpatrick is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Specialist, Certified Workplace Conflict Mediator, and Mental Health Service Provider in the state of Tennessee and a National Certified Counselor. She is also a member the American Counseling Association, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the Tennessee Mental Health Counseling Association, and the Middle Tennessee Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She is a frequent presenter at local and national conferences, and has had numerous articles published. She received her Master of Education degree in Human Development Counseling from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.