

Restorative Sleep

How can you make a difference in your own life to get quality restorative sleep?

Below are ten of the most common factors that cause sleep disturbances. Recognizing each, how it can affect your sleep patterns and ways to adjust or combat these enemies of sleep can help ensure you rest easy tonight!

Top 10 Sleep Disturbances:

1. Noise – Noise tends to be most disruptive during the light stages of sleep, which generally occur at the beginning of the night and in recurring periods throughout, yet it's also possible for noises to rouse you from deep and REM sleep. To get the sleep that you need, it's important to protect your sleep environment against unwanted sound for the duration of your night's rest. It's helpful to decrease noise by turning off the TV and eliminating personal alarms that are typically set on cellphones. Studies also show that white noise is beneficial in creating a sleep-friendly environment. White noise is when sound waves of a broad spectrum of frequencies are combined, forming a sound similar to the constant hum a fan creates when it's blowing air. White noise works in two ways: by blocking distracting noises and by producing soothing sounds that are relaxing and help to induce sleep.

2. Light – Individuals need 10,000 lux (unit of illumination) of direct sunlight for 30 minutes per day or 1,000 lux of light for 120 minutes, to optimize sleep patterns. However, certain types of light can also disturb sleep. Set lights to go on and off at specific times (ie – use automatic timers/dimmers). Some examples of preferred nighttime lighting would be amber/red spectrum lights, lower-intensity between 8 pm - 8 am. Pathway motion detector lights at night are also a nice safety feature if you have to get up to go to the bathroom at night.

3. Sleeping Environment – Noise and light are common things to consider when creating your perfect sleep environment. However, other factors such as aromatherapy can have a positive impact on quality sleep as well. For example, try using lavender and bergamot to help with rest and relaxation.

4. Napping – Who doesn't love a good nap? Just remember, too much napping during the day can impair the natural sleep/wake cycle. It's beneficial to limit napping to 30 minutes or less per day.

5. Medications – Insomnia is a common side effect of many medications. Identify medications that support sleep and which medications disturb sleep. In general, it's recommended to try to reduce the amount of medications you take and alter the timing to avoid unnecessary sleep disturbances.

"A well-spent day brings
happy sleep."
Leonardo da Vinci

6. Continence Needs – Nocturia, or frequent awakenings to use the bathroom at night, can be improved by timing of laxatives, stool softeners, food, fluids and diuretics interfering with sleep. Try to start reducing fluid intake in the early evening so you're not getting up to use the bathroom as much.

7. Pain – Pain has been recognized as a key factor in sleep disturbances. The issue with pain and sleep loss is that the two help to contribute to each other. Experiencing pain can lead to sleep deprivation, but sleep deprivation can also make pain symptoms worse. Pain can also make it difficult to get to sleep at night, cause frequent awakenings during the night or make a person wake earlier than planned. This means pain has both an effect on the quantity of sleep as well as the quality. People experiencing pain are also much more sensitive to stress, which is another major perpetrator in sleep loss. If you're experiencing chronic or acute pain that's disturbing your sleep, ask the CaringEdge professionals about additional therapy services that can address the cause of your pain.

8. Positioning – It can be helpful to try pressure relieving mattresses, (ie – static pressure redistribution mattresses or low-airflow, high-density mattresses) or try a new pillow that meets your preference and is appropriate for side or back sleepers. Some individuals like soft, firm, extra-firm, etc., while others may prefer full-body pillows; choose the one that makes you most comfortable.

9. Activity and/or Inactivity – Want to fall asleep faster and wake up feeling more rested? Then get moving! As little as 10 minutes of aerobic exercise, such as walking or cycling, can dramatically improve your quality of sleep, especially when done on a regular basis. Physical activity improves sleep quality and increases sleep duration. It can be especially helpful if you are able to exercise outdoors and let your body absorb natural sunlight during the daytime hours – remember the benefits that natural light has on sleep too! Not to mention that boredom and lack of purposeful activity can lead to functional decline and sleep disturbance as well; all the more reason to get active and get involved in meaningful activities that will benefit you during the day and at night!

10. Diet – Eating an overall healthy and nutrient-rich diet affects brain health and activity, and in turn your sleep. It's important for people to know that both what you eat, as well as the timing of when you eat, matter when it comes to sleep and long-term health. Focus on general healthy eating guidelines and not skipping or shifting meals too much. For example, in the evening try eating carbohydrates such as whole grain cereal and milk or peanut butter spread on whole wheat toast with an apple. Potassium found in bananas, dried fruit, almonds, cheese and popcorn are also good evening snacks that can help induce sleep.

In summary, creating a culture of restorative sleep requires decreasing sleep disturbances and creating an environment that promotes active engagement during the day. Having restful, restorative sleep at night is the foundation of well-being. If you're experiencing frequent sleep disturbances, contact the CaringEdge experts today! They can evaluate and treat some of the causes while helping you get back to enjoying a good night's sleep.

Resource – Empira Restorative Sleep Series: Make The Difference of Night and Day; Sarah Brown, RN, LNHA, BS. Empira is a company that provides resources through evidence-based research and practice.

