

Restorative Rest

Life today is fast paced, exciting - and exhausting. Is more sleep the answer? A refreshing, uninterrupted night's sleep is a definite advantage, but most people work at sedentary jobs, with deadlines and emotionally draining problems. It is often difficult to fall asleep and rest peacefully. Fatigue is one of the most common reasons that people visit the doctor.

Sleep is essential to maintain a well-balanced mind and healthy body. It allows your body to renew itself and aids in healing. Rest strengthens the immune system and can add years to your life. If deprived of adequate sleep, great demands are made on your back-up energy resources. If you do this habitually, you can expect to have little resistance to disease and stress. How much sleep is enough? Usually 7-8 hours of sleep a night is best for adults. The earlier hours, before midnight, are more restorative to the body. If you need to nap, the best time is in the morning.

What about sleeping medications to induce sleep if you cannot get to sleep? During normal sleep, one has alternating periods of light and deep sleep. Dreaming seems to be a natural outlet, and takes place during the light sleep. Sleep medications often suppress this stage of sleep, and on awaking you may not feel as refreshed in spite of apparently sound sleep. If continued over time, sleep medications will contribute to chronic fatigue.

The best sleep inducers are natural means. Engage in active exercise daily to best counteract mental and emotional fatigue. Walk, swim or work in the garden instead of watching so much TV. Take a warm bath (not hot) with some soft music playing and dim lights to relax the body and mind. Have a warm drink, but avoid caffeine, even during the day. It is a stimulant that commonly causes insomnia. Maintain a regular schedule for going to bed and getting up. An empty stomach promotes better sleep. Eat your evening meal several hours before bedtime and make it the lightest meal.

Try these simple exercises to help you relax: Stretch, roll your neck in slow large circles, smile and hold it, frown and hold it, raise your eyebrows and hold it, take some deep breaths, relax. Don't rehearse the day's problems at bedtime. Count your blessings and fill your mind with gratitude and thanksgiving. The ultimate rest is found in God. Give Him your burdens and accept His peace and forgiveness.

The scripture advises us to work six days and rest the seventh - that is His plan for the proper balance between work and rest.