How is your sleep? Do you experience sleep problems, occasionally or much of the time? If your sleep is usually pretty good, do you get enough of it?

“Sleep debt” is a huge and growing problem in our society. Although the amount of needed sleep varies from person to person, it is believed that most people need 60-90 minutes more sleep than they get.

Good sleep is critical. Sleep strengthens the nerve circuits underlying learning and memory, and sleep deprivation interferes with our ability to come up with creative solutions to life’s challenges. Inadequate sleep also seriously impairs our ability to process blood sugar, thereby impeding the action of insulin and possibly contributing to obesity, and it elevates the stress hormone cortisol, which in turn suppresses our immune system, making us more vulnerable to sickness and disease.

Many things can interfere with sleep. Stress is a major culprit. In an October 2007 study by the American Psychological Association, nearly half of 2,000 people surveyed said that they had lost sleep during the previous month due to stress. When we’re stressed, we don’t sleep well, and when we don’t sleep well, we are more easily stressed.

Sleep centers are available for those with severe problems. For others, excellent tips can be found on websites like WebMD and MayoClinic.com. Searching under “sleep hygiene” can reveal similar resources. Your EAP is also a great resource. EAP counselors have experience helping people to deal with whatever is stressing them out, whether it’s relationships, work-life balance, or financial concerns. The important thing is to be intentional and consistent in your efforts to make healthful changes. Don’t sleep on that; begin today!

Your EAP counselor can help you address things that interfere with your sleep. Please call 743-1EAP and schedule an appointment if you would like to speak with a counselor. There are many ways you can start getting more rest; see the back page of this newsletter for more information.
Getting a good night of sleep!

Use these tips to help you on your way to a good night of sleep:

- Add gentle exercise into your day (i.e., stretching).
- Develop a bedtime routine (this will start conditioning your body for sleep).
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and smoking.
- Keep noise level down.
- Secure a dark room during sleeping hours.
- Reserve your bed for sleeping.
- Try a cup of hot chamomile tea.
- Quiet your mind (i.e., meditation, deep breathing).

Simple Bliss Tea: Relax

**Ingredients:**
1/4 cup dried chamomile flowers per cup
1/4 cup vanilla soy milk, cream, milk, or half-and-half per cup
Honey or maple syrup to sweeten

**Directions:**
1. Pour 8 oz boiling water over the chamomile, cover, and steep 15 to 20 minutes, until strong.
2. Add the soy milk and sweetener to taste.


If you are not a tea drinker, try a warm bath. Add a couple drops of lavender or eucalyptus scent. Pair the bath with some soothing music and by no time you will be on your way to relaxation!

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