

WELLNESS review

Are you tired of counting sheep?

Is lack of sleep giving you bags under your eyes? Are you so sleep-deprived that the only way you can get through the morning is by drinking a triple espresso? Not being able to sleep affects everyone at some point in their life and about 10% of the population suffer from insomnia that continues for six months or more. Many experts recommend that we get between seven and nine hours of sleep per night and whilst it is important to make sure that we get enough sleep, it is equally important that we get good quality sleep.

The body needs rest, the brain needs sleep...

Sleep is necessary to help our brain recover and recuperate from the day's activities. We have different cycles of sleep to achieve this. These cycles are known as Rapid Eye Movement (REM) and non-REM (slow wave) sleep, and they are meant to occur in a specific order and for the right amount of time. If you are not getting enough sleep, or your sleep cycles are disturbed, then your brain is not getting enough time to rejuvenate and 'reset', and you are more likely to suffer some of the following:

- Poor concentration
- Poor memory
- Clumsiness/carelessness
- Low mood
- Irritability
- Fatigue

So what keeps us tossing and turning all night?

Whilst there are many reasons for sleep disturbances, stress is the most common trigger. Researchers have found that there is often an increase in stress hormones (such as cortisol) in people who have sleeping problems. So if it takes you a while to nod off, or if you frequently wake during the night and cannot fall back to sleep, then it is essential to address your stress levels.

Natural therapies may be the answer to help you sleep

The benefits of using natural therapies for sleep maintenance are that they are not addictive like some medications and won't leave you feeling groggy in the morning. Even more importantly, natural medicines can help address the underlying causes of poor sleep such as nutritional deficiencies and stress.

A traditional herb that may improve your sleeping patterns is *Panax notoginseng*. *Panax notoginseng* has been used in Traditional Chinese Medicine for thousands of years to help quiet the mind and treat insomnia. A specific extract derived from *Panax notoginseng* known as Panatonin™, has been clinically shown to reduce the time taken to fall asleep and improve sleeping time. It works by regulating the 'excitability' of the brain; in doing so it may reduce the incidence of stress and anxiety. By reducing stress and anxiety it makes it easier for the brain to 'switch off' and sleep better, improving both the quality and quantity of sleep. So if you find that sleeping has become difficult then this herbal extract may be worth considering.

Another exciting natural product that is useful for those who can't sleep is a natural peptide called Lactium™ that is made from the breakdown of milk proteins. A specialised process breaks down the proteins in milk to produce Lactium™. This peptide has recently been found to assist stress and reduce the severity of anxiety. Once again, this is important for anyone not getting enough sleep.

Other nutrients such as magnesium, calcium, and iron are also important for good sleep. A deficiency in these minerals can lead to insomnia. We can assist you in identifying the underlying causes of poor sleeping patterns and work with you to overcome these.

Tips for a better night's sleep...

As well as the herbs and natural supplements discussed, these handy hints can also help you get a better night's sleep:

- Get regular exercise (avoid exercising two hours before bed)
- Eliminate stimulants such as caffeine and sugar (even reducing them during the day may help)
- Try to go to bed around the same time each night
- Create a dark sleeping environment
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Use the bed and bedroom only for sleep and intimacy with your partner
- If you can't sleep, try not to focus too hard on getting to sleep as this creates stress and can perpetuate the situation.

So don't lie awake all night, make an appointment to come and see us today!

