

What's Sleep Got to Do with It?

Sleep is a topic that seems to come up at least 10 times a day in my office. Everyone wants to know if they are sleeping on the right pillow, the right mattress, in the right position, or whether they are getting the right amount of sleep. In this fast paced, fast-food kind of world, sleep is the lifestyle and good health habit that is often most neglected; however, I would argue that it is one of the most essential, if not the most important piece of living a healthy life. The initial feedback I get from someone who has just started getting adjusted usually always includes that they are sleeping so much better. Having spinal misalignments, however, is only part of what can hinder our ability to get a good night of sleep.

Life is so high-paced that our sleep is what we sacrifice in order to get everything done in a 24-hour period. We shortcut our sleep and use artificial methods to compensate for the deficit. The use of drugs, "energy" drinks, and coffee to "give ourselves a boost" has become all too common today. A coffee shop on every corner should make that evident. We all start to feel like we are justified in using chemicals to make up for lost sleep and to beat feelings of fatigue, because "everyone is doing it". This mentality only perpetuates the idea that it is okay for us to stay up late, push ourselves beyond our natural limits and then just cover it all up by popping a pill or downing a latte.

Sleep is time for healing. It is our body's natural time to recharge, rejuvenate and replenish. We all need that time to recover from the "daily grind" and to make up for the stress we put on ourselves throughout the day. The average person needs between 6-8 hours of QUALITY sleep per night to function at their optimum level the next day. Missing even one night of good sleep can alter your well-being enough to lower your immune system and make it that much more difficult to fight off the stress of the day. You are also left with the feeling of always trying to "catch up with yourself."

There are three main factors that influence the quality of sleep, environment, diet and stress level. Stress is one of the most difficult things to manage. Setting and achieving goals, however small they may be, will not only eliminate stress, but will also leave you with a sense of accomplishment and pride in yourself. Make a checklist of all of the little things you need to accomplish today and physically check them off when you finish them. You will feel encouraged and enthusiastic about continuing your day. If you knock out some of the stress you are feeling throughout the day, you will be able to lay your head on your pillow at night and enjoy a peaceful, restful sleep.

Sleep is an important part of our health that we often take for granted. Our society rewards those of us who can push ourselves beyond our natural limits and be supremely productive. The truth is that we are more productive if we can slow down, focus on the few things that are in front of us, prioritize and get the necessary amount of rest that our bodies need to function at the optimum level the following day. The adage "a good night of sleep fixes all" has a great deal of truth behind it.

As always, remember to stay well adjusted by visiting your chiropractor regularly and exercise, exercise, exercise!