

SLEEP

I would like to share my thoughts on how sleep can affect our health. It is becoming increasingly clear that sleep is as fundamental for our health as nutrition and movement. Sleep is the time when the body and the brain recover from the damages of the day and key homeostatic functions are performed. In particular, sleep is critical for proper functioning of the following functions:

- Critical thinking, memory and judgment
- Metabolism
- Immunity

The way I prefer to summarize the various ways sleep is important to our health is to say that not sleeping properly ages the body faster. When one is sleeping properly, the body ages slower, and when one is not sleeping properly, the body ages faster.

I am often asked, "How much should I sleep?" The answer in some ways is very straightforward. You should sleep as much as your body needs. Although you can survive on less, most people need to sleep an average of 7-9 hours to be at their best. Sleeping 6 or less hours a night is associated with worse health outcomes. The best way to find out how much sleep you need is to avoid caffeine for a week and then go to sleep in a dark, quiet room and not set an alarm clock. When you awaken naturally is when you are done. For me, that is about 9.25 hours.

As we get older, our sleep architecture becomes more delicate and we need to practice good sleep hygiene in order to sleep properly. Most adults sleep less as they get older not because they need less sleep, but because they have difficulty sleeping soundly. The most important items to consider if you are not getting enough deep restful sleep are:

- Avoid all caffeine for the entire day
- Avoid all electronics and bright lights 1 hour prior to sleep
- Exercise during the day
- Eat a small dinner
- Avoid alcohol at night

Proper sleep is like fitness. As one ages it does not happen by itself, and we can become "out of shape" with our sleeping habits just like we can for our physical fitness. However, the good news is that just like physical fitness. Sleep can be improved and often restored to normal with healthy habits and attention. If you are having problems sleeping, don't ignore the issue. Talk to your doctor to discuss how you can sleep better.

Celo

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