



Tibb Highlights the Importance of Sleep

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It is said that modern society is not defined by the clock. We live in times where the world does not stop. Engulfed by a growing avalanche of technological advancements, mankind is driven to achieve more, work harder, faster, longer. Though testament to our progression, where does it leave the basic human necessities required to thrive...how do our bodies cope with this ideology of being driven? Sadly, people are more stressed than ever. Lifestyle illnesses are on the increase and depressive disorders are becoming increasingly common. Though the conditions that assail us may be attributed to many factors, more and more research indicates that sleep, or the lack thereof, is among the aggravating influences in modern-day illness conditions.

Sleep is the elixir of life. Without a good night's rest, we cannot function optimally and the capacity for the brain to retain, store and process information becomes severely compromised. Sleep is the ideal state for the body to be repaired and invigorated. Yet, sleeping patterns among the world's population are becoming increasingly disturbing with statistics showing that most adults complain about feeling listless and ill due to a lack of sleep. The problems associated with poor sleeping patterns and the effect they have on the body are becoming so worrying that, in fact, sleep clinics are gaining more and more popularity as sleep disorders and erratic work hours rise with continued intensity.

We now know why Hippocrates, the acknowledged Father of Medicine, identified a good night's sleep as a major factor for keeping us in balanced and robust health. Today, we have sufficient supporting evidence to show that good sleep and better health go together. For example there is a definite connection between poor sleep quality and a greater chance of developing type 2 diabetes. Even more ominously, sleep, or lack of it, seems to underlie the onset of chronic illnesses such as high blood pressure. It is also found that too little sleep may be linked to excess weight gain, depression, thyroid disorders and anxiety.

Tibb regards sleep as one of the Six Lifestyle Factors that define overall well-being (<http://tibb.co.za/sleep.html>). Without sufficient and adequate sleep, the body cannot successfully renew and maintain physical and psychological performance. While we are awake, our bodies increase in

dryness and heat due to physical and mental activity, leading to a depletion of energy. Tibb considers sleep to be cooling and moistening thereby allowing the body to restore balance.

The remarkable ability of the body to heal itself is a principle known as Physis in Tibb. Its philosophy and research support the notion that sleep is a time set aside to allow Physis to operate uninterrupted on both the body and the mind, to restore harmony after the stresses of our less-than-harmonious lives, and to sort out the myriad experiences, sensations and emotional turmoil that goes with the territory of everyday life. Physis, is present in each of us and draws us towards an ideal state of health

The need for sleep varies for each individual, for different age groups, according to physical and mental activity and even for different sexes, with women requiring more sleep than men. Some people feel fine after 6 hours a night, whilst others cannot function without an undisturbed 8 hours. In Tibb, sleep requirements vary according to a person's Temperament (http://tibb.co.za/concepts_tibb.html). Your body is the best indicator of how much sleep you require. If you are still tired on rising each day, chances are that you probably may not be getting enough quality sleep. The best time to sleep is from 22h00 until before sunrise. If you generally retire much later than this over a long period, you will find that your body increases in dryness leaving you feeling aged and lethargic. Try changing your sleep patterns slowly, retiring 15 minutes earlier each night until you reach the point of sleeping around the ideal time. The saying, "early to bed and early to rise" has undue wisdom, as the value of the freshness of morning air is imperative for maintenance of health.

Supper should be taken at least three hours before sleeping. In addition, a brisk 15-20 minute walk half-an-hour after your meal is also beneficial, especially if you tend towards insomnia. Many people function better after a short mid-afternoon nap, of course, with work commitments, this may not always be possible, but try fitting in your lunch break with a brief period of rest. Tibb practitioners advise the following to ensure a good night's rest:

- Get into a routine. Retire and rise at the same time every day, even on the weekends when you feel like lying in. Take a warm bath before retiring. Pray or meditate, do breathing exercises and read for a few minutes.
- See to it that the bedroom is a sanctuary. A quiet, well-ventilated room with good quality linen can do wonders.
- Prepare mentally-focus on the positive of your past day and plan for the day to come. Keep a journal and jot this down to help purge these thoughts from your mind and onto paper.

Be aware that troubled sleep may be the result of anxiety or an indication that disease may be developing. Listen to your body, as continued disturbed sleep will lead to headaches, nervousness, lack of concentration, illnesses and mood swings.

You have the right to rest. Take to heart this wonderful gift of recovery and optimize it to increase your lifespan, improve your health and maintain your well-being. Go on, lay down your head and go to sleep! Your body will thank you.