

SLEEP BETTER... NATURALLY!

Healthy, rejuvenating sleep promotes optimal physical and mental health and prevents acute and chronic disease. Certain lifestyle factors could be preventing you from getting your coveted, restorative, 8 (or more!) hours of sleep. If you want to sleep better naturally, try removing some of these sleep inhibitors and implementing these simple tips to help you achieve the rejuvenating sleep your body needs!

Sleep Inhibitor # 1: Caffeine (Found in coffee, black tea, cola)

- 1 cup of coffee (caffeine) remains in the bloodstream for up to 48 hours. If you opt for an afternoon or evening cup, your regular sleep patterns can be disrupted.

TIP: A Swiss-water process decaffeinated coffee, an aromatic herbal tea, water, or diluted fruit juice will give you a more refreshing boost when you need it.

Sleep Inhibitor #2: Alcohol

- Consuming one or two drinks in the evening depresses the nervous system and does help many people initiate sleep. BUT, alcohol creates hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) a few hours after consuming it, and as a result, the body wakes up because of high adrenalin levels.
- Bottom Line: Although you may fall asleep a little easier after a glass of wine, you *will* be getting that low blood sugar wake up call in the early morning hours and find it difficult to get back to sleep!

TIP: Try a relaxing chamomile tea or herbal “sleepy time” combination tea, found at regular grocery stores. These herbs are non-toxic and help to truly calm the nervous system and brain. They also help promote digestion by reducing gas and bloating.

Sleep Inhibitor #3: Stress

- “Worry Sleep”, as my brother in-law calls it, is a light sleep, where the mind is still working on



processing past, present or future anxieties. Cortisol, a stress hormone can become too high in evening hours, when it should naturally have dropped to lower, healthier levels.

- A high level of cortisol suppresses melatonin, the most important sleep hormone naturally secreted by the brain when the sun goes down. When melatonin levels are suppressed, initiating sleep is difficult and deeper stages of sleep are not maintained during the evening.

TIP: Meditation, yoga, journaling, Epsom salt baths, reading, and gentle evening walks are all healthy ways to mitigate the effects of day and night time stress. An hour before “lights out,” be sure to turn off all electronic devices as well to allow your body and mind time to prepare for sleep.

Other Sleep Stealing Culprits to Watch for:

- Sugar and other stimulating foods: Soda, candy, chocolate, cookies, baked goods, food dyes, MSG, preservatives, and spicy food all increase heart rate and stimulate the nervous system & brain into over-active states, preventing sleep.
- T.V. (the news!): Bad news and reports about disasters in the world promote feelings of helplessness, uncertainty, and fear.
- Emails, work, web surfing, bright lights: Electronics within 10 feet of sleeping spaces suppresses melatonin secretion, inhibiting regular sleep patterns.
- Low blood sugar: Going more than four hours without food before bed. For example, having dinner at 5pm and going to bed at 10pm without a healthy evening snack can reduce sleep initiation or deep sleep through the night.
- Vigorous physical activity in the evening: Exercise is actually a very good way to promote proper sleep. However, exercise in the evening can prevent deep, quality sleep because the body is still ‘revved up’.

Research shows that chronic poor sleep quantity and quality can lead to health problems such as:

- **Immune System Weakness:** Increased infections & decreased healing or recovery from in-

fections, surgery or injury. Allergy symptoms can also worsen.

- **Chronic Disease:** Promotion and worsening of diabetes and other chronic medical conditions.
- **Cognitive Decline:** Poor concentration, focus, and memory.
- **FATIGUE!**
- **Reduced Stress Tolerance**
- **Mood Alterations:** Reactivity, irritability and feelings of sadness, worry or anger can happen more easily. Anxiety, depression, ADHD, OCD, Bi-polar, and other diagnosed mental illnesses also worsen.

DO YOU HAVE A CHRONIC SLEEP PROBLEM?

If you are suffering from chronic, unrelenting sleep issues, follow these guidelines to help promote easier, more restful, rejuvenating sleep.

Give your body **at least four** weeks of following the suggested lifestyle factors before assessing their helpfulness.

After four weeks, if you have not noticed a significant change in your sleep quality and quantity, then seek medical attention from your local naturopathic doctor. An ND can help you get to the bottom or why you are not sleeping well and design a treatment plan to suit your unique health needs, using safe, effective, natural therapy.

Your ND may approach your sleep problem using the following Safe, Effective, Naturopathic Therapies:

- **Acupuncture Treatment:** Can improve chronic pain, promoting more comfortable sleep. Acupuncture treatments by a registered ND also help to balance a person’s energy systems in the body, bringing balance and harmony to the nervous system and brain, promoting easier, deeper sleep.
- **Nutritional Assessment and Supplementation:** A registered ND can assess and treat nutritional deficiencies or hormonal imbalances that may be preventing good sleep.



- **Natural Medicines:** Your ND may prescribe Melatonin, Vitamin B12, omega three fish oils, and anxiety-reducing (sleep promoting) herbs.
- **Lifestyle Counseling:** Nutritional, activity level, and healthy stress-coping guidance designed to each individual's temperament and health needs are provided by a reg. ND.
- **Referral to other allied health care practitioners:** Such as an MD, NP, RMT, osteopathic doctor, physiotherapist, or psychotherapist.
- **Assessment by:** Personal & family health history, physical exam, blood work and radiographic imaging when indicated, hormone assessments, and referral to sleep study if necessary.

Your local ND will help restore your body and mind to balance, promoting deeper sleep so you can live with more ease, joy and vitality!



Heidi McGill is a registered doctor of naturopathic medicine. She has owned and operated Healing Foundations since November 2006. She has helped dozens of families discover their best balance for overall wellness in body and mind, using the principles and practices of

naturopathic medicine. Dr. Heidi regularly appears as "Guelph's Naturopathic Expert" on Inside Guelph a local Roger's T.V. program. She also writes articles on topics that matter to you. Dr. Heidi is focused on educating you about how your body functions in combination with the natural and cultural environment. She is genuinely passionate about guiding you towards optimal health, vitality and more joy in your life.

Healing Foundations Naturopathic Clinic

Phone: 519-821-1999

Email: clinic@healingfoundations.ca

Website: www.healingfoundations.ca