Sleep Well, Live Well

The Health Risks of Poor Sleep & Practical Ways to Rest Better

WHEN HORMONES CHANGE...

- **Sleep patterns** may change, including difficulty staying asleep.
- **Temperature regulation may change**, contributing to **hot flashes** and night sweats.

> *"I began having two hours of sleep at night. I would go to bed and wake up two hours later fully awake, with no ability to put myself back to sleep. It was a nightmare."*

What I Learned: *Sleep is non-negotiable. When a serious sleep problem develops, it deserves attention rather than being ignored.*

Six Important Health Risks Linked With Chronic Poor Sleep

1 Cardiovascular Health

Habitually insufficient or disrupted sleep is associated with higher blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, heart attack and stroke risk.

2 Type 2 Diabetes & Metabolic Health

Poor sleep may impair insulin sensitivity and glucose regulation, increasing the likelihood of metabolic problems.

3 Weight Gain & Obesity

Insufficient sleep can influence appetite, food choices and energy regulation, contributing to weight gain.

4 Mental Health & Cognition

Persistent sleep disturbance is linked with depression, anxiety, difficulty concentrating and, in observational studies, later cognitive decline.

5 Accidents & Injuries

Sleep deprivation reduces alertness and reaction time. Drowsy driving and workplace errors can become dangerous.

6 Immune Health & Long-Term Outcomes

Regularly inadequate sleep can affect immune function and is associated with poorer overall health outcomes.

These are associations and risks—not a prediction that any individual will develop these conditions. Persistent insomnia or sleep disruption deserves a professional assessment.

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SIX WAYS TO IMPROVE SLEEP

1 Keep a consistent sleep schedule

Aim for regular bed and wake times, including weekends. Create a calming 60–90-minute wind-down routine with dim lights, reading, stretching or a warm shower.

2 Use daylight and evening light strategically

Seek daylight after waking. Reduce bright lighting and stimulating screen use before bedtime when possible.

3 Make your bedroom sleep-friendly

Keep the room cool, dark and quiet. Consider blackout curtains, an eye mask or white noise. Try to associate your bed primarily with sleep and intimacy.

4 Watch caffeine, alcohol, nicotine and meals

Limit late-day caffeine and avoid nicotine near bedtime. Alcohol can disrupt sleep, and heavy meals close to bedtime may worsen discomfort or reflux.

5 Move regularly and manage stress

Regular aerobic activity, strength training and calming practices may help. Adjust vigorous evening exercise if it interferes with your sleep.

6 Discuss menopause-related treatment when appropriats

If hot flashes, night sweats or other symptoms disrupt your sleep, ask a qualified clinician about menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) and non-hormonal approaches. Suitability depends on your health history and individual risks.

UNDERSTANDING HOT FLASHES & NIGHT SWEATS

What they feel like

Sudden heat, flushing and sweating, sometimes with palpitations or a sense of anxiety.

Why they occur

Hormonal shifts, particularly changes in estrogen, affect the hypothalamus — the brain's temperature-regulation centre.

How they affect sleep

Night sweats may repeatedly wake you and contribute to fatigue, irritability and poor concentration the next day.

How long they may last

An individual episode often lasts minutes; symptoms can continue for years and vary widely in frequency and severity.

Common triggers

Warm environments, alcohol, caffeine, spicy foods, smoking and stress can be triggers for some women.

TRAVEL AND SUPPLEMENTS

Melatonin may help with jet lag and adjusting to new time zones, but timing and suitability matter. Magnesium and progesterone should not be treated as universal sleep remedies; discuss supplements and prescribed hormones with your healthcare professional.

WHEN SLEEP PROBLEMS PERSIST

For ongoing insomnia, ask about cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia (CBT-I), a recommended first-line treatment. A clinician can also check for sleep apnea, medication effects, mood conditions, pain and other causes of disrupted sleep.

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL

- Could my sleep disruption be related to menopause, sleep apnea or another condition?
- Would CBT-I, symptom management or another treatment be appropriate?
- Could MHT or a non-hormonal treatment help, given my history?
- Are melatonin, magnesium or other supplements appropriate alongside my medications?

"He gives His beloved sleep." — Psalm 127:2

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