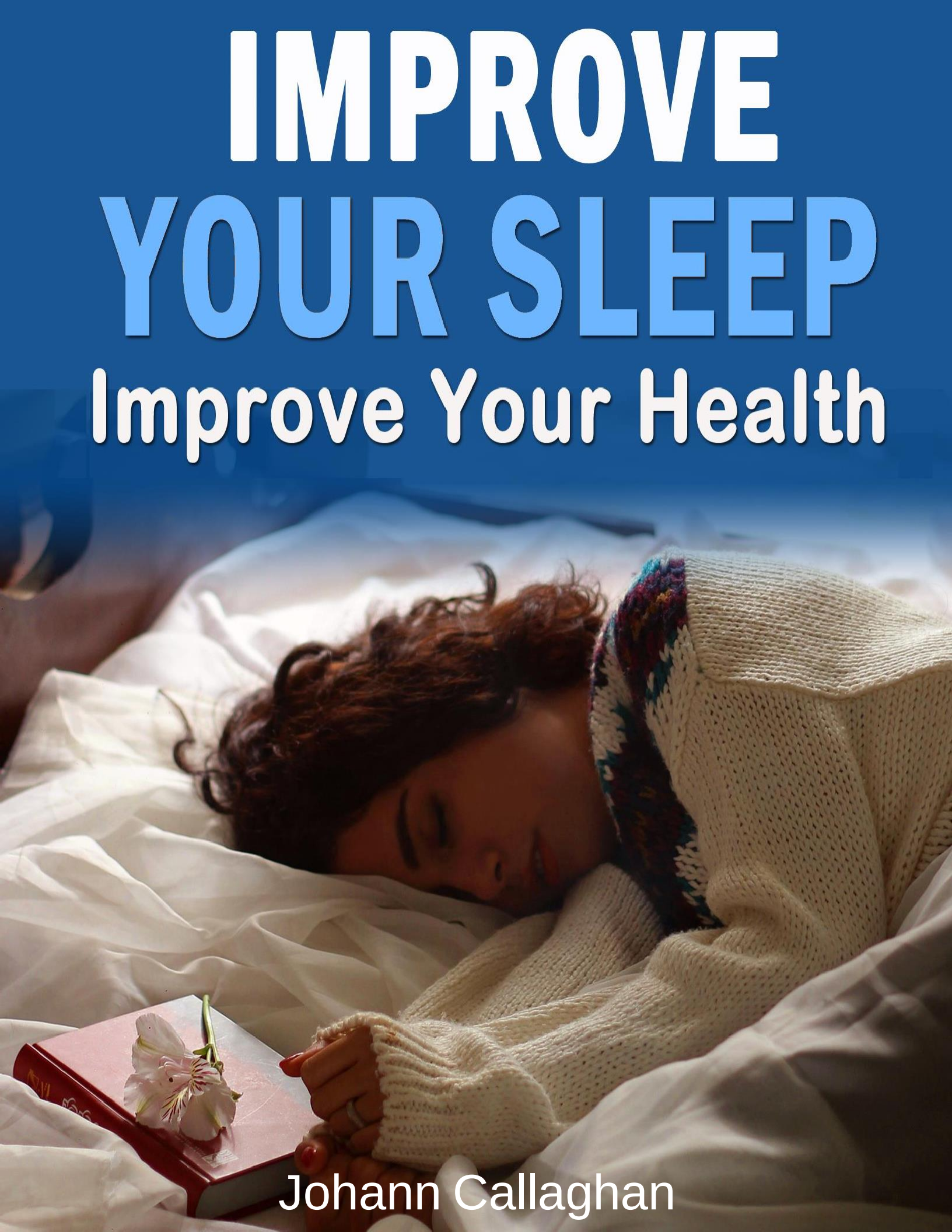
IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP

Improve Your Health



Johann Callaghan

Welcome!

I'm so glad you downloaded *Improve Your Sleep, Improve Your Health*. By downloading this e-book, you have taken the first step to your Sleep Success.

About Johann

After losing her baby daughter, Megan, in 2007 Johann's whole life changed. As part of her healing and sleepless nights, she found a new holistic way of being. She discovered the innate healing power we all have, to overcome any obstacle with a positive outlook.

Johann discovered the power of the mind can change our perspectives hugely, our nutrition, movement and especially sleep collectively enable us to be healthy overall and happy.

Johann is a bestselling Author, International Speaker, Educator, Sleep Expert, Health Coach, Podcaster and Mum. Featured widely in the media, Johann educates, inspires, and empowers individuals to take control of their lives through vibrant, health-conscious living, enhanced by quality sleep. Johann's global impact empowers people through online courses, podcasts, and compelling speaking engagements. As the visionary host of "The Empowering Family Health Podcast," she fosters healthier family dynamics.

Johann's first book 'How to get a good night's sleep' has been a major success in Ireland and across the world.

Johann believes EVERYTHING is better with better sleep. Join her on the path to a healthier, more vibrant life, where dreams can become your reality.

- Improve Your Sleep, Improve Your Life -

Presented by

Johann Callaghan

DISCLAIMER

The following content is for informational purposes only. It is intended to provide information that may help you manage your wellbeing. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, or cure your condition or to be a substitute for advice from your physician or other healthcare professional. If you any concerns about your health, please talk with a healthcare provider.

CONTENTS

1 WHY IS SLEEP SO IMPORTANT FOR YOUR HEALTH?

You already know that sleep is important. Without adequate amounts, you feel sleepy. You may also experience other obvious signs and symptoms such as crankiness, headaches, and/or trouble concentrating. However, there are even more serious consequences of not getting enough shut-eye. These are explained in what follows:

Your Physical Health –

1. **Increased Risk of Obesity due to the following factors –**

   a.) No energy – If you do not get adequate sleep at night, you may delay getting out of bed in the morning, because you are too sleepy. As a result, now you do not have enough time to make a healthy breakfast and pack a healthy lunch. You rush out of the house, and you pick up a coffee and donut on the way to work. If you packed a lunch, you eat whatever you threw together at the last minute in the morning, or you buy whatever is on the menu at the cafeteria that day. On your way home, you are tired and you do not feel like spending an hour in the kitchen preparing something, so you decide to get take-out pizza. You decide to skip the gym that night, because you are just too tired.

   You can see how this becomes a vicious cycle and can result in weight gain.

   b.) Your body's use of glucose is impaired – Normally, when you eat, your body's cells are supposed to use the energy (glucose). However, when you are sleep deprived, your body is not as efficient at doing this. This makes you feel more tired, hungrier so you eat more, and it also increases your chance of diabetes.

   c.) Your hormones are thrown out-of-whack – A hormone called, cortisol, is produced by your adrenal glands. It is commonly referred to as one of the "stress hormones." Cortisol increases with lack of sleep, and it also makes it harder to sleep. Normally, your cortisol levels should be highest in the morning so that it is easy to wake up, and lowest in the evenings when your body prepares for sleep and as it sleeps. High levels of cortisol, when it should be low in your body, is linked to weight gain, obesity, and diabetes.

   A couple other important hormones that are affected by lack of sleep include grehlin and leptin. Grehlin is the hormone that tells you when you are hungry, and that it is time to eat. In contrast, leptin is a hormone that tells you when you are full, and that it is time to stop eating. Unfortunately, when you don't get enough sleep, grehlin increases and leptin decreases, putting you at risk of weight gain.

2. **Increased Risk of Diseases –** As already mentioned above, lack of sleep increases potential for weight gain and unstable blood sugars, which then increases your risk of diabetes.

Heart disease is also higher if you are chronically sleep deprived. According to the National Sleep Foundation, despite exercise, age, weight, and smoking habits, your risk of heart disease goes up if you do not get enough sleep. Although the exact causes are not known, lack of sleep is linked to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and increased inflammation in the body. All sleep-deprived individuals are at risk of this, but people with sleep apnoea tend to have even higher rates of heart disease than those without the medical problem.

3. **Lowered Immune System Functioning –** Your immune system is what protects your body from germs. When your body encounters germs, your body goes to work to fight off the invaders. However, when you don't get enough sleep, your immune system does not function as well, increasing your susceptibility to colds, flu, and other ailments. The simple explanation is that your immune system cannot produce the germ-fighting cells that it needs when you aren't getting enough sleep. Your body is effective at restoring these fighter cells when you sleep.

4. **Your Sex Life Suffers –** This actually could have been included in the topic of hormone disruption above. This is because the sex hormone, testosterone, is reduced in men and women who are leading sleep-deprived lives. This, in turn, results in a decreased interest in sex for both genders, erectile dysfunction in males, and reduced vaginal lubrication in females.

5. **Increased Risk of Injuries and Accidents –** When you are tired, your concentration and focus is poor. Therefore, this puts you at increased risk of workplace injuries and car accidents.

Your Cognitive, Mental, & Emotional Health –

Pulling all-nighters is not only a bad idea for your physical health, it also negatively impacts your mental, cognitive, and emotional health. More people are recognizing that the days of

bragging about being able to function with only a few hours of sleep, is really a health hazard and not something with which to mess around.

Here are 7 ways that sleep deprivation affects these areas of your health:

1. **Altered Mood –** You already know that you feel irritable and short-tempered when you don't get enough sleep. Chronic lack of sleep, however, also increases your chances of depression and anxiety.

2. **Decreased Ability to Handle Stress –** Stressful situations are difficult enough to handle when you have gotten a good sleep. When you get less than ideal amounts of sleep, and you are dealing with stress, your ability to do this well, deteriorates significantly. You may get angry, yell, cry, or do things that you normally wouldn't do if you had gotten a good night of sleep.

3. **Decreased Ability to Think & Learn –** Your ability to concentrate and focus on tasks, make decisions, and carry through with them, is hampered a great deal with lack of sleep.

   In addition, your ability to learn new things is also reduced. Sleep is known to help with new learning, and it is probably the reason why babies and young children sleep so much as they are constantly learning and adapting to their environments. New learning does not end with childhood, so adequate sleep continues to play an important role in adults. In addition, your brain assimilates information as you sleep, helping you to retain information.

4. **Reduced Judgment Skills –** Although this also falls under the inability to think, it deserves its own bullet point. If your judgment and insight is lacking due to poor sleep, your decision-making skills will be affected. You may make more impulsive decisions, or do things that are potentially unsafe while driving, for example. Your ability to assess situations accurately decreases.

5. **Negatively Impacts Relationships –** Because of your reduced ability to handle stress and your increased irritability, it makes sense that your personal and work relationships will suffer. This may also take a toll on your self-esteem as friendships and relationships are ruined, and you find that you have no one with which to talk.

6. **Poor Memory –** Again, this goes back to the inability to concentrate and focus on what is happening around you. If you do not register things in your short-term memory, it is impossible for the brain to convert memories to long term ones.

7. **Slowed Reaction Time –** Sleepiness when driving, has been described as being as dangerous as driving under the influence of alcohol. If you mix lack of sleep and alcohol, it makes you even more dangerous behind the wheel.

   Not only is driving dangerous when you lack sleep, working in certain industries or professions, when sleep-deprived, can be extremely dangerous. For example, construction workers and police officers are two of many professions that require alertness and the ability to react quickly.

2 IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP WITH THESE NATURAL SUPPLEMENTS

Natural supplements can be an effective tool to improve your sleep, when used in combination with other components of sleep hygiene. As they can have a powerful effect on your body, always consult with a knowledgeable healthcare practitioner who can guide you as to their proper use and can consider whether they may interfere with other health conditions you have or other medications you may be taking.

In what follows, are supplements that are commonly used to get a better night of sleep. It is important to note, however, that the determination of which particular supplements will help your sleep, will depend on what is causing you to have sleep problems in the first place. Medical and psychological causes for loss of sleep, should always be ruled out first by your physician.

Melatonin – This sleep hormone is made naturally by your brain, and it is released in response to darkness. It is what contributes to the feeling of sleepiness. However, exposure to artificial blue light in your home in the evenings from your lightbulbs, computer, tablets, smartphones, and televisions, for example, is suppressing the release of this important sleep hormone. In this way, melatonin regulates your sleep/wake cycle. Keep in mind that as you get older, your body produces less melatonin.

Melatonin supplements are not recommended for everyone (ex. Pregnant or nursing moms), so be sure to check with your healthcare practitioner before use. Never give any sleep supplement to your child or teen without first consulting with his/her physician.

Melatonin can be useful for shift workers, people with jet lag, people who fall asleep too early or too late, and those who have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.

Melatonin supplements are sold over-the-counter in some countries. To aid you in comparing and contrasting various melatonin supplements, it can be helpful to use a sleep diary. Record the time you feel sleepy, if you wake up at night, what time you wake up in the morning, how you feel (refreshed or not) when you wake up, and so forth.

You can also buy various doses of melatonin, but do not assume that the more, the better. While melatonin is generally considered safe for short-term use at low to moderate doses, higher doses may be associated with several potential side effects. It's important to note that the appropriate dose of melatonin can vary from person to person. It is wiser to start with a lower dose, and adjust it upwards gradually, only if needed. This is where speaking and consulting with a healthcare professional, who is knowledgeable on the topic of sleep supplements, can help you tremendously.

There is no one solution for all. Studies are focusing on determining how much melatonin should be taken, and when to take it. Generally speaking, 60 – 90 minutes before bedtime seems to work best for those using it. However, be prepared also to experiment with what time works best to take a certain dosage of melatonin. You do this by taking note of when that particular dose of melatonin starts to make you feel sleepy.

In addition to different doses of melatonin, pay attention to whether the brand you are trying is

instant release. These are better if you have trouble falling asleep. However, if you have trouble staying asleep, you may find time-release melatonin more effective for you. Some people need a combination of both types, if they have trouble both falling and staying asleep.

Before considering melatonin, it is essential to consult with a healthcare professional.

GABA and L-theanine – These are two supplements that will be spoken of together, because they have similarities in common, as well as differences.

L-theanine – This supplement is sold in health food stores, and over the counter in pharmacies. L-theanine is actually found naturally in tea leaves. It is an amino acid, that has structural characteristics similar to glutamate, which is another amino acid in your body. Glutamate is a precursor to GABA. GABA is a chemical messenger in your brain that sends messages to other cells in your brain. GABA will be discussed in more detail a little bit later, but the important thing that you need to know now is that l-theanine increases the production of GABA.

A lot of research has been done with l-theanine, demonstrating that it can calm your mind, and increase concentration and focus, without causing drowsiness. It is also good for relaxation and reducing stress. Green tea contains the most l-theanine, but it is also found in black and oolong teas. It is not found in rooibos tea, which originates from a red bush native to South Africa. It is also not found in herbal teas, which are not made from tea leaves.

Research has also shown that l-theanine works harmoniously with caffeine. In other words, when you consume tea that contains both ingredients – l-theanine and caffeine – you will feel mentally more alert, calm, and less affected by the caffeine in the tea. This is unlike coffee, which only contains caffeine, and can make you feel jittery. Even if you decide to drink decaffeinated tea, you will still receive the benefits of the l-theanine as no difference exists in concentrations of l-theanine between caffeinated and decaffeinated versions. Choosing the decaffeinated version is the wiser option if you drink a lot of tea, or if you like to relax with a cup of tea in the evening before going to bed.

L-theanine is relatively safe, but it can lower blood pressure, so as with anything, always speak to your doctor and pharmacist before using.

GABA – This is short for gamma-aminobutyric acid, but for simplicity sake, it's called GABA. Like already mentioned, GABA is a chemical made by your brain that sends messages to other cells (it's a neurotransmitter) in your brain. Like l-theanine, it provides a calming and relaxing effect on your cells. Unlike l-theanine, however, it is not found in tea. As mentioned previously though, GABA's precursor, glutamate or glutamic acid, is found in food. Examples of foods that contain the precursor to GABA include ripe tomatoes, walnuts, kefir, sea vegetables, tree nuts, bananas, citrus fruits (oranges), brown rice, and fermented vegetables such as sauerkraut. By including more GABA-producing foods in your diet, you can actually increase the amount of GABA in your brain, which will allow you to relax and feel calmer. Vitamin B6 is also very important in the production of GABA.

Related to this, studies have shown that less GABA is found in the brains of people who suffer from insomnia. Therefore, sufficient levels of GABA in your brain appear important in ensuring that you fall asleep easily, as well as have a refreshing sleep. Without enough GABA, deep,

restorative sleep is not possible.

GABA supplements do not appear to be absorbed readily by the body, and it is possible to overdose on GABA supplements. Therefore, if you want to increase your GABA levels, foods that help produce it (like those mentioned above), are probably your best bet.

L-theanine works in collaboration with GABA by improving GABA's effectiveness in calming your mind.

B Vitamins – The B vitamins play an important role in many functions in your body. The eight B vitamins – B1 (Thiamine), B2 (Riboflavin), B3 (Niacin), B5 (Pantothenic Acid), B6 (Pyridoxine), B7 (Biotin), B9 (Folate), and B12 (Cobalamin) – are known as the B-complex.

Although each of the B vitamins has its own role, they do still work together. Vitamins B3, B5, B6, B9, and B12, in particular, play an important role in quality sleep. For example, if you are deficient in Vitamin B6, your body produces less GABA, which is an important chemical messenger known for relaxation and calmness in the brain for sleep. Vitamin B12 is another "sleep vitamin" that helps in the production of melatonin (the sleep hormone) required for good sleep. Vitamin B9 is also important for those people who suffer from a condition known as "restless leg syndrome" during sleep.

Magnesium – This mineral plays an important role in your mood, metabolism, maintenance of your bone and heart health, as well as promotion of healthy sleep. Magnesium is also involved in your body's reaction to stress, and it is helpful in reducing anxiety as well. Insomnia has also been linked to low magnesium levels. Magnesium plays an important role in ensuring you enter the deep, restorative stage of sleep. In addition, magnesium increases levels of GABA – the chemical in your brain that produces a calming effect on your cells so that you can fall asleep. This is just a small sampling and explanation of how important it is to have adequate levels of magnesium in your body at all times.

Magnesium is not produced by your body. Therefore, you must get it in food sources or through supplements. Food sources include dark leafy vegetables, dairy, broccoli, almonds, sunflower seeds, and others. Unfortunately, many people do not get enough magnesium through their diets

alone. As a result, supplementation may be indicated. Always speak to a physician knowledgeable in sleep disorders, a naturopathic doctor, and/or pharmacist to provide you with advice as to whether you should be supplementing with magnesium. This is especially important if you have any pre-existing health conditions, or if you are already on medications as magnesium could potentially interact with them. The healthcare practitioner will also be able to provide you with a dosage level, if it is determined that you would benefit from magnesium. Magnesium citrate is absorbed decently, and is a good option over magnesium oxide, which is not.

3 UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF SLEEP

Sleep is a necessity. It allows your brain and body to recover after periods of wakefulness. Specifically, sleep restores your body's ability to function, to repair body tissues, create hormones, consolidate memories and learning, and regulate mood. Sleep makes up such an important part of our lives, that there are people who spend the majority of their careers dedicated to the topic.

Whether you experience an occasional day of sleepiness, or you feel like you spend most of your days in a sleep-deprived state, it is important to understand the different stages of sleep. This can then help you improve the quality of your sleep so that you will enhance your functioning when you are awake.

No one stage of sleep is more important than another. Studies have shown that each stage plays a distinctive role in your health. In addition, your sleep follows a predictable pattern every night. In other words, actual stages exist where your brain waves change, the ability to be awakened easily changes, and there are specific times when you experience vivid dreaming.

Sleep can be divided into two major categories – **REM sleep and non-REM sleep.**

REM stands for "Rapid Eye Movement."

First, we will discuss **non-REM sleep**, as this is always the starting point for healthy adults when you fall asleep. According to the National Sleep Foundation, three phases of non-REM sleep exist, each lasting from 5 to 15 minutes, and making up about 75% of your sleep at night. You must pass through all three phases before you reach the REM phase about 90 minutes after you first fall asleep. This cycle of non-REM – REM sleep repeats itself throughout the night, with the first full cycle lasting between 70 and 100 minutes. The second and later sleep cycles last between 90 and 120 minutes.

The three phases of non-REM sleep include:

N1 (also known as Stage 1):

Your eyes are closed, and you feel drowsy. Your brain activity starts to slow down. This is the transition period from wakefulness to sleep. During this time, you may experience the sensation of falling, as well as a muscle jerk that wakes you up. This is normal. Muscle tone continues to be high.

In this stage, you are still easily awakened, and you will not feel too drowsy or disoriented if woken up. If awakened from this stage, you may not even be aware that you had fallen asleep. This stage usually lasts no more than seven minutes.

N2 (also known as Stage 2):

Your brain waves become even slower, but they have occasional bursts of activity. Your body temperature goes down. If you are awakened from this stage, you will know that you have been sleeping.

N3 (also known as Stages 3 and 4):

Recordings of your brain waves at these stages demonstrate slow waves called, "delta waves." Your body temperature decreases even more, your breathing is slower, and your blood pressure decreases. This is what is typically known as the "deep sleep" stage.

It is harder to wake someone up during this stage of sleep, but if you are awakened, you will feel groggy, you may feel disoriented, and it will take some time to feel alert.

This restorative stage of sleep is important for your body to recover from the fatigue it undergoes from the previous hours you were awake, and to build up energy for the next day. Your body also rebuilds bone and muscle, repairs tissues, and increases the functioning of your immune system, during this time of sleep. Growth hormone is also released, which is important for muscle development and growth.

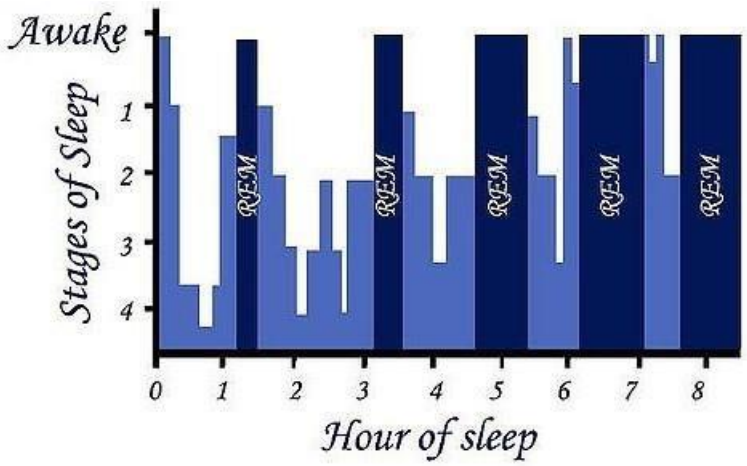
Most of Stages 3 and 4 slow-wave sleep occurs in the early hours of the night. In other words, as the night progresses, you spend less and less of your sleep in N3.

REM sleep –

As previously mentioned, REM stands for "rapid eye movement." Your heart rate and breathing increase during REM sleep. Your breathing sounds shallow and irregular. Your eyes move rapidly, hence the term, rapid eye movement. Your muscle tone decreases so significantly that it resembles paralysis.

This stage of sleep typically occurs ninety minutes after you first fall asleep, and approximately every ninety minutes thereafter in your sleep that night. The first REM sleep period lasts no more than ten minutes, and continues to increase each cycle of the night, resulting in being around an hour long for the final REM episode of the night. As a result, most of your REM sleep occurs in the early morning hours. Although dreaming occurs at all stages of sleep, you have the most vivid dreams during REM sleep when the brain is quite active.

You move through all of these stages in a sequential manner, repeating the stages as you sleep.



4 MEDICAL CONDITIONS THAT INTERFERE WITH NORMAL SLEEP

If you are always exhausted, despite making real attempts at improving your sleep, or you have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep (insomnia), then you should always discuss this with your medical doctor. There are two reasons for this. First, some medications contain compounds that make it harder to sleep. For example, some pain medications have caffeine in them. In addition, some asthma medications, and even nasal decongestants can also disrupt your sleep. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Second, a number of health conditions, both physical or mental, can interfere with your sleep, and some of them can actually be dangerous.

Here are a few physical medical conditions to know about.

Sleep Apnoea

According to National Council On Aging, 936 million adults around the world are estimated to have mild to severe Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA). Snoring is a common symptom of sleep apnoea in up to 94% of patients. Untreated sleep apnoea can lead to heart, kidney, and metabolic health complications.

This is actually a very common sleep disorder. Unfortunately, sleep apnoea is quite serious, as it involves the interruption of breathing during sleep. Pauses in breathing can last from a few seconds to much longer, and they can occur many times an hour. In one type of sleep apnoea, the brain does not send the signals for breathing to occur. The second type of sleep apnoea is more common, and it is called "obstructive sleep apnoea," because it involves the collapse of tissues in the throat during sleep. It is more common in overweight and obese individuals, and weight loss can be a solution to the problem. However, other things that can contribute to sleep apnoea include large tonsils, sinus issues, family history, and so on. So even if you are not overweight, you can still be affected by sleep apnoea. In fact, children are also diagnosed with sleep apnoea.

Other risk factors for sleep apnoea are:

- Being of male gender
- Being a smoker
- You have high blood pressure
- You have asthma
- You have diabetes
- You have reflux/heartburn
- You are older than 40
- You have nasal blockages from large adenoids, sinus problems, or the bone between your nostrils is offset (deviated nasal septum)

Some of the signs and symptoms that point to the possibility of sleep apnoea include:

- Choking during sleep
- Loud snoring
- Morning headaches

- Pauses in your breathing while sleeping
- Dry mouth when waking up
- Exhausted
- High blood pressure
- Waking up with a dry throat

If you or your partner notice any of the above, be sure to speak to your doctor.

In order to make a diagnosis, your doctor may order a sleep lab test or a sleep home test to confirm if sleep apnoea is the source of your sleep woes. If sleep apnoea is confirmed, then your doctor will determine the next step. As previously mentioned, weight loss may be recommended. If large tonsils or adenoids are the issue, then surgery may be the treatment plan. Some people may benefit from special dental appliances or mouth guards that help keep their airway open during sleep. Smoking cessation can also help, as can ensuring you don't sleep on your back. Sewing tennis balls into the back of your pajamas is one way to wake you up if you turn onto your back during sleep. Sometimes, a special machine such as a CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) will be recommended to ensure that the tissues in your throat do not collapse during sleep.

Heartburn

Heartburn is the result of regurgitation of stomach contents, including stomach acid, back up your food pipe (the esophagus) that causes a burning pain in your chest. These acidic contents can reach the back of your throat, causing you to cough or choke, and wake up from sleep.

Fortunately, some effective techniques exist to help you manage heartburn, and improve your sleep. These include:

- **Use a bed wedge –** You can find these in medical supply stores that sell all kinds of medical equipment. If they do not have one in stock, they can be ordered in. The purpose for the use of a bed wedge is to raise your upper body on an incline, making it harder for stomach contents to move against gravity. Regular pillows are not effective as you need to raise your chest too.
- **Sleep on your left side –** This is not always effective for people with severe reflux that results in heartburn, but it is worth a try as it works for many. Studies have shown that when you sleep on your left side, there is less chance of stomach contents travelling up your food pipe to your throat when compared to right side lying. Here are two easy sayings to help you remember what side to sleep on: "Right is wrong." or "Left is right."
- **Elevate the head of your bed –** The easiest way to do this is to elevate the head of your bed six inches higher than that of your feet. You can purchase items called "bed blocks" from any medical store, as these are often used by people with arthritis or hip replacements to raise their beds. In the case of heartburn and reflux, you only put the bed blocks under the head of the bed. Like the bed wedge, it makes it harder for stomach acid to make its way upwards against gravity.
- **Consult with your doctor and a pharmacist –** Just as some medications interfere with sleep, some medications also contribute to reflux, causing you to lose quality and quantity of sleep.
- **Lose a few pounds –** By losing weight, you can decrease the severity and frequency of reflux and heartburn.
- **Do not eat a large meal right before bedtime –** A small snack is okay to help improve sleep. However, you should not be eating a large meal two to three hours before bedtime. In addition, it really is advisable to avoid foods that make your reflux worse. You may need to use a food diary to determine what they are, or you may already know what to avoid. Common culprits are carbonated beverages, coffee, tea, spicy foods, garlic, onions, and fatty fried foods.
- **Quit smoking –** This is much easier said than done. As you know, the average smoker makes many attempts before achieving success. However, it may be worth seeing if giving up the habit also improves your sleep, if it is accompanied by a reduction in reflux symptoms. Smoking is known to relax the muscles of your food pipe (esophagus), contributing to reflux.

Diabetes

One reason why you may not be sleeping well, is that you have diabetes, and do not even know it. According to American Diabetes Association, In 2021, 38.4 million Americans, or 11.6% of the population, had diabetes.

Diabetes and poor sleep go hand in hand. People whose blood sugars are high due to the diabetes, often spend a lot of time up at night having to urinate. They also may wake up with night sweats or wake up due to feelings of low blood sugar (hypoglycemia).

Likewise, poor sleep also increases your risk of diabetes.

If you are diabetic, by eating properly during the day and evening, you can stabilize your blood sugars, so that you will get a better sleep.

Arthritis

It is estimated that 80% of people with arthritis also suffer from sleep problems. Pain in joints can make it difficult to find a comfortable position to fall asleep and to remain sleeping.

Thyroid Problems

Your thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland found in your neck, and it secretes hormones. It has a major role in controlling your metabolism.

If your thyroid is not functioning properly, it is possible that you have developed an overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism), or an underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism).

If your thyroid is overactive, it makes it difficult to fall asleep, and you may also experience night sweats.

If your thyroid is underactive, then you feel sleepy and cold all the time.

Your physician can do a blood test that determines how your thyroid is functioning by measuring your levels of thyroid hormones.

Restless Legs Syndrome

This disorder is really a neurological disorder that originates in the brain. However, it is considered a sleep disorder, as it interferes with sleep.

Symptoms include unpleasant, uncomfortable, or painful sensations in the legs that occur when inactive such as sitting or lying still. These sensations create an intense urge to move the legs, resulting in the name, "restless legs syndrome." Symptoms tend to be worse in the late afternoon and evenings, and most severe during the night when you are trying to sleep. As a result, you have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep.

Interestingly, the symptoms can subside in the morning, which is when people affected by restless legs syndrome, can achieve their most restful sleep. In some, but not all cases, restless legs syndrome is related to another health condition, such as iron-deficiency anemia, diabetes, or peripheral neuropathy (numbness and pain that results from damage – usually due to diabetes - to nerves in your arms and legs).

Perimenopause, Menopause, and Post-Menopause

Whether your body is just beginning to change (perimenopause), or has already gone through menopause, many women experienced disrupted sleep due to a change in hormone levels - less production of estrogen and progesterone. These sleep disruptions tend to affect the quality of sleep, not the time spent sleeping. Hot flashes, sweating, and drenched pajamas can wake women up from sleep, resulting in next-day sleepiness. Insomnia is also a common complaint of women in this stage of their lives. Hormone replacement therapy is sometimes used, or you can opt for more natural supplements such as black cohosh.

Depression

Difficulty sleeping can be a sign of depression. Lack of sleep can also make the depression worse, as it is more difficult to cope with daily stresses when you are tired.

In addition, some people with depression sleep much more, and yet still feel fatigued all the time. The depression can occur on its own, or it can accompany other medical issues. For example, an underactive thyroid can exhibit depression as a symptom. People with arthritis may also experience depression related to the pain that negatively affects their daily functioning.

Anxiety

Just as with depression, anxiety can cause difficulty sleeping, or lack of sleep can cause anxiety. People with ongoing insomnia are at increased risk of developing a diagnosed anxiety disorder.

5 6 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP TONIGHT

Sleep hygiene involves doing a number of different things that prepare your body for sleep, and allow it to have quality sleep so that you can be alert the next day. Following a regular bedtime routine is one aspect of sleep hygiene, but there are many other things that you can do to improve your sleep starting now. These include:

1. **Caffeine cut-off times –** You know that caffeine should be limited before bedtime, but when exactly in the day should you stop drinking caffeinated beverages? It is probably earlier than you realize. A general guideline is no later than 2 p.m. This is because studies have shown that consumption of caffeine even six hours before bedtime, can cause disturbances in sleep quality. Although you may not notice the effects of the caffeine when you go to sleep, your body's sleep quality will still be poorer.

   Therefore, recommendations include drinking caffeinated beverages in the morning hours, and very early afternoon. Drink no more than 400 mg of caffeine per day, which is equal to about 4 cups of coffee. Any more than that, and you should be choosing decaffeinated coffee or tea. And don't forget that caffeine is also found in cola, hot chocolate, cocoa, and some over-the-counter and prescription pain medications.

2. **Limit alcohol intake –** Although alcohol is a central nervous system depressant, and causes you to feel sleepy, it actually disrupts your sleep quality. Your body does not enter the deeper sleep cycle, which is necessary to restore your energy for the next day. In addition, as the alcohol wears off, your brain "reboots" causing disruption in the normal brain wave pattern that allows for quality sleep.

3. **Go to bed at the same time every night – give or take 20 minutes.** You have, no doubt, heard this advice before. By doing so, you can actually train your body to wake up without an alarm.

4. **Have sex before sleep time –** Sleep hygiene experts tell you to reserve your bed only for sleep and sex. However, let's take it a step further. Studies show that sex, in conjunction with orgasms, is a great way to end the day before you nod off. This is because sex can

distract you (be sure to put away your phone and other electronic devices!), and it promotes the release of "feel-good" hormones that relax you and reduce your perception of pain.

5. **Set up your bedroom environment –** In addition to setting up a pleasant setting that is cozy and has calming colors, you need to limit the light in your bedroom before you fall asleep and during sleep. Even the light from your alarm clock can negatively affect your sleep, so cover the light emitting from it. In addition, be sure to use room-darkening shades over the windows. Keep the room quiet. If you live on a busy, loud street, for example, you may need to create white noise using a fan, or you can use an app. Just be sure that, if it is a fan, that it is not blowing directly on you. Keep your bedroom temperature lower, as this will promote better sleep.

6. **Get up after 20 minutes in bed, if you haven't fallen asleep yet –** There is no point to staying in bed tossing and turning. All it does it frustrate you, which impedes the goal – falling asleep. Instead, it is better to get up and do something quiet. The goal remains the same. You want to get back to bed and get some sleep. Try taking your mind off the issue by reading a book (not a tablet or smartphone as the blue light emitted will increase your wakefulness), meditating, listening to calming music, or doing some relaxation exercises.

What's Next?

Now you have 5 simple steps to Sleep Success.

Start with yourself. Make the decision to get your life back on track and create the lifestyle you desire.

If you need my personal help planning out your Sleep Strategy then book a free 15 minute call now, **click here to book your call now** and get started on your sleep success and life changing results today!

Stop struggling with your sleep and start getting #SleepSuccess you deserve!

For more information about online programs and

Events JohannCallaghan.com

or

https://linktr.ee/johanncallaghan_sleepcoach

Subscribe to the Podcast

Call me today! Don't waste another day. I'm on a mission to help you with your sleep success strategy.

Sleep Well

Johann Callaghan, The Sleep Success Coach