



Sleep

Good sleep is crucial for good health. When you are sleep deprived, your cortisol rises, which mimics the stress of the blood sugar roller coaster. Which triggers harmful effects, like weight gain, diabetes, heart attacks, high blood pressure, depression, osteoporosis, depressed immunity, and more.

Lack of sleep also increases the “hunger hormone” ghrelin. Ghrelin is produced mostly by your stomach and acts on your brain's pleasure sensories, making you reach for that second (or tenth) cookie because you remember how wonderful they taste.

No sleep means an increase in ghrelin, and that increases cravings. Let's face it, common sense says that when you don't get enough sleep, you don't have enough energy. When you don't have enough energy, your body goes looking for quick energy fixes, usually in the form of sugar or caffeine, which has you riding the Roller Coaster.

Clearly lack of sleep can unbalance blood sugar. Good sleep isn't something that just happens, unless you are a baby or teenager. And as great as it would to be younger, that is not possible!

It's hard to sleep well when we eat late dinners, answer emails, surf the 'net, or do work, and then get right into bed and watch the evening news about all the disaster, pain, and suffering in the world. It triggers a spike in cortisol when cortisol is suppose to naturally drop so we can sleep. So avoid watching the latest episode of GOT before bed!

One hour before you want to go to sleep, “power down” all of your electronics, like TV, smartphones, computers. Create a ritual of things you do before bed to ready your system physically and psychologically for sleep. Creating your “Power Down” hour will help you get to sleep regularly - even if you can do just one hour earlier a night it will help. See your morning and night routine guide to make your own routine.

So, how much sleep is enough? The answer is it depends.

Plus, your sleep needs will change as your life and your age changes. For example, teenagers and pregnant women in their first trimester need to sleep a LOT!!!

A great way to look at it is through Ayurveda, which is an ancient Hindu medicinal system. Ayurveda believes everything around us is made up of five elements: Air, Space, Fire, Water and Earth. These energies combine to make 3 “doshas” Kapha, Pitta and Vata. Doshas are biological energies that influence our body and our minds. Each one has their own qualities and traits.

Vata dosha— is a combination of air and space, and the qualities are light, mobile, dry, cold, erratic and subtitle.

Pitta dosha--- is composed of fire and water, So Pitta's qualities are hot, sharp, light and intense.

Kapha dosha--- is comprised of earth and water, and it is heavy, dull, stable, soft and static.

In Ayurveda, they believe that the doshas exist not only in our bodies, but also outside of us, influencing a day's energy. This is really kind of fascinating. And they believe that each dosha is dominant twice a day.

It follows this schedule:

- From 2 am to 6 am, that's Vata dominance, so light, airy, mobile, subtle, lots of dreaming occurs during this time.
- From 6am to 10am, they believe that Kapha dominates, where there is sort of a heavy, dull, stable energy.
- From 10 am to 2 pm is when they believe Pitta dominates, and that's of course comprised of fire and water.

That makes sense when thinking of meal timing where many cultures believe that between 10 am and 2 pm when the sun is highest in the sky is when your digestive fire is also the hottest. Then from 2 to 6 pm is Vata dominance again. So there is a lot of mental energy happening at this time of day. Then from 6 to 10 pm, we're back to Kapha dominance, with that dull, stable, soft, preparing for bed energy, and then from 10 pm to 2 am, we're back to Pitta dominance, where you feel fiery. These times of dominance really affect the way we feel by increasing the respective energy within us. For this reason, it is said in Ayurveda, that our bodies experience harmony when we carry out a daily routine that balances the doshas influence.

So, Ayurveda recommends going to sleep by or around 10 pm, because that's during Kapha time, between 6 pm and 10 pm. So they feel that if you go to sleep before or by 10 pm, you're capitalizing on that Kapha energy of calming down, slowing down, and being able to sleep. The qualities of Kapha in Ayurveda are of course slow, stable and dull. This has influence on our bodies and mind that is ideal for falling asleep.

After 10 pm, we enter the Pitta time of day—and remember that the qualities of Pitta are hot, sharp, light and intense. None of those traits are really conducive to falling asleep. This explains why you can get a second wind if you're up past 10, and around 11 or 12 at night, and you feel like ready and motivated to do anything but sleep.

So, according to Ayurveda, it's best to go to bed by 10 because it makes it so much easier to fall asleep than a later bedtime.

Depending on an individual's constitution:

- Ayurveda recommends between 6 and 8 hours of sleep a night.
- Vata needs the most sleep.
- Kapha types the least.

So let's take a moment to find out what your dosha is! Download and fill out The Dosha Quiz. This is pretty cool to find out and will make a ton of sense based on your reactions to sleep, stress and food.

You may be a parents of newborns, teenagers you wait up for at night, have jobs with shift work etc. So don't stress about this. That makes getting sleep worse. All you can do is take a look at your situations and determine how to make it work. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Sometimes people don't want to bud in, but are so willing to help out. If you are a new mom and know you need a nap, reach out to someone so you can get some rest. You need it if you want to be parenting at your best!

Some factors that affect your sleep:

- Eating too close to going to bed.
- Poor gut health (reduces serotonin levels)
- High cortisol levels in the evening
- Stress/busy mind.
- Cutting out carbs.
- Low magnesium levels.
- Imbalance of neurotransmitters.

See the How to Sleep Guide for some tips and tricks to getting quality sleep.