

Why You Aren't Sleeping (And What You Can Do About It!)

KEY WORDS

sleep, insomnia, sleepless, sleep apnea, anxiety, pain, menopause, perimenopause, sedatives, tranquilizers

For something that each and every one of us experiences virtually every single night, much of the landscape we call sleep remains uncharted territory. Why do we even need to sleep? The answers range from giving the body down-time to relax and rebuild, to storing new memories, to engaging in sub-conscious problem solving. All these things are true, but it still doesn't fully unravel all the mysteries of why we need sleep or even define what it is.

We don't have to uncover all of sleep's secrets to know one thing for certain: bad things happen to our health if we don't get a solid amount of healthy, restful sleep. In this week's article, we are going to talk about why many people don't get the replenishing sleep they crave, and how clinically studied herbal formulas can have a tremendous impact in addressing minor sleep problems, or even insomnia.

Importance of Sleep

Sleep habits in America have been deteriorating over the last century. According to the 2010 *Sleep in America* poll (National Sleep Foundation), most Americans get less than 7 hours of sleep a night during the work week. When asked how often they could say, "I had a good night's sleep," 15% of the respondents replied *rarely or never*, while 12% said they slept well only a few times a month. This means almost 1/3 of the people surveyed aren't getting good quality sleep the majority of the time! And when asked if they thought they were getting enough sleep to function adequately, again, almost 1/3 of the respondents said "no."

What Interferes with Good Sleep?

Electric lights, physical inactivity, and our 24/7 society have taken a toll. Rare is the bedroom in America that can claim natural darkness and restful quiet. Our stone-age bodies have not adapted well to a post-modern world of digital lights on every clock and appliance, brightly-lit streets and driveways, and the constant hum of industry and traffic. The first step in achieving healthy sleep is to make your bedroom as

peaceful, dark, and quiet as possible, given the constraints of the modern world. Thick window shades and even white noise machines or ear plugs may be needed to dampen the effects of the outside world. Try to make the bedroom a peaceful oasis in your hectic life.

Other proven initiatives for improving sleep hygiene include evaluating your mattress for optimal body alignment, assessing your pillow for allergens, keeping your bedroom cool, and trying to keep to the same sleep schedule of going to bed and arising near the same time each day. I have found that a small protein snack an hour before bed can greatly improve sleep quality, as it helps to even out blood sugar changes during the night.

There are other issues that interfere with healthy sleep. Some of the most commonly reported reasons for disturbed sleep are emotional concerns: relationships, work problems, finances, etc. Health-related problems, such as pain, sleep apnea, or restless leg syndrome, can all disrupt sleep. However, there are natural options that can help you eliminate the barriers to good sleep and get you back into healthy, restorative sleep cycles.

The Vicious Cycle

Did you know that caffeine is the most used (and abused!) stimulant drug in the world? Considering how few of us are getting a good night's rest, it is no wonder. However, relying on stimulants to get you through the day sets you up for a vicious, self-defeating cycle. You don't sleep well, so you need caffeine to get going. You are so revved up at night from all the caffeine that you can't settle down. You don't get enough sleep and need more caffeine to get going the next day. This dysfunctional cycle keeps repeating, day after day.

In an effort to get some sleep, many people turn to over-the-counter sleep aids. However, these products often cause more problems than they solve. Side effects include morning drowsiness, dry mouth, and forgetfulness. As your body becomes used to them, the dosage has to get higher and higher in order to get effects – increasing the risks of side effects and even creating addiction.

In order to get back on track, you need to gradually *reduce* your daytime reliance on stimulants

To your good health,
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as you *increase* your amount of healthy, restful sleep. Most people can accomplish this in relatively short-order – generally a week, or if particularly stubborn sleep issues, two weeks.

Overall Natural Sleep Support

For anyone who has problems sleeping, I recommend a combination of chemotyped plant oils that includes marjoram, lavender, mandarin, ravintsara and lemon verbena. Each of these oils aids in promoting a sense of calm, reducing stress, and allowing you to fall asleep naturally. Unlike a sedative product, these oils won't "knock you out." They just help you relax and drift off to sleep. You can read more about each of these oils and how they work in my article called [Trouble Sleeping?](#) on TerryTalksNutrition.com website.

Create an Individualized Sleep Protocol

There are many issues that may interfere with healthy sleep, and my recommendation for using chemotyped oils for natural sleep support may not take full effect if you are not also addressing these underlying issues. The four major problems I'd like to cover are: **Pain, Anxiety, Mood** and **Peri-Menopause or Menopause**.

Pain. If you suffer from chronic pain – back pain, bursitis, arthritis, or other chronic conditions – you are very likely not sleeping well. The pain probably seems worse at night, when you are trying to fall asleep and there are no other distractions to take your mind off it. This, plus the many times that pain awak-

More...

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ens you throughout the night, guarantees you won't be well rested the next day. And that is not the only problem. During sleep, our body conducts its repair cycle. If you don't cycle through all the stages of sleep, this important task cannot be fully carried out. In fact, research has shown that when otherwise healthy people have their sleep interrupted, even if it is just enough to keep them from falling into the deep stages of sleep without actually waking them up to full alertness, they soon begin to experience fatigue, muscle aches, and other pain during the day.

Pain can be reduced or eliminated by stopping one of its major root causes – inflammation. If you are a pain sufferer, you have probably tried ibuprofen, aspirin, naproxen (Aleve®) or maybe even stronger prescription drugs. While these medications do have an effect on inflammation, they also have side effects, some significant. I prefer to relieve pain with a combination of natural anti-inflammatory nutrients. Curcumin (from the spice turmeric), boswellia, the amino acid DLPA, and the enzyme nattokinase can provide significant relief from any kind of inflammatory pain with no significant side effects. Many people get relief after just one dose of this combination, but the longer you use it the better it works. You need to make sure, however, that the curcumin in the formula is well-absorbed – at least 7 times that of plain curcumin or you may not get full pain relief. For more details on these nutrients, see the article [Acute and Chronic Pain](#) on TerryTalksNutrition.com website.

Anxiety. Is your mind racing with negative thoughts when you are supposed to be falling asleep? Are you also watching the clock and worrying about the fact that you aren't sleeping? Anxiety is particularly troublesome when it comes to restful sleep. You are either tossing and turning and cannot fall asleep or you are exhausted, fall asleep immediately, then wake up at 2 a.m. and cannot get back to sleep. For these people, I recommend a very special Echinacea extract from *Echinacea angustifolia*. Researchers at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences discovered that when grown under the right conditions, harvested and processed in a particular way, and taken at the right dosage level, compounds in this plant can help reduce anxiety as *effectively* as certain prescription medications, without the side effects. You can take this extract during the day when you are having a stressful day,

or an hour before bedtime to help calm your mind before you go to sleep. See [Reduce Tension and Relieve Anxiety Naturally](#) for more details on this unique, anxiety-relieving extract.

Mood issues. Sometimes mood changes can be both a cause *and* a result of disrupted sleep – for example, irritability. Lack of sleep depletes your emotional reserves and makes it more difficult to cope with adverse situations. Things that you might be able to laugh off suddenly become extremely irritating. And being irritable and upset can make it harder to let go at night, calm yourself and fall asleep. One of my favorite combinations of chemotyped plants oils is mandarin, basil and verbena. Mandarin is known as “happy oil” for its ability to ease tension and improve mood. Basil and verbena also aid in creating a calm feeling and relieving stress. When people take this combination, they often say they can feel a lift in their mood with the first dose. For more information on these amazing plant oils, see my recent Terry Talks Nutrition feature article entitled [Chemotyped Plant Oils](#).

Peri-menopause and menopause. Peri-menopause (the time before menopause when menstrual cycles become irregular) and menopause (the cessation of menstrual cycles) are a time of changing hormone levels, specifically estrogen and progesterone. As levels of these hormones fluctuate and begin to decline, many women experience physical symptoms: hot flashes, night sweats, irritability, vaginal dryness, headaches, weight gain, and more. One change during this transition that almost all women will experience is difficulty sleeping. Disrupted sleep during peri-menopause and menopause is often due to hot flashes and/or night sweats. To relieve these symptoms, I suggest trying a combination of black cohosh, hops, and sour green cider apple extract. This formula can help you reduce hot flashes/night sweats, and help you sleep better, without the risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer associated with hormone therapy. Please read [A Menopause Protocol You Can Live With](#) for more suggestions on making an easy transition through menopause.

Conclusion

Some sleep problems respond easily to bedroom environment changes and a chemotyped-oil formula designed for healthy rest. But some sleep issues are more complicated, and a protocol may be needed to address highly individual-

ized factors contributing to poor sleep. This may mean addressing pain, anxiety, mood, and/or menopausal hormone fluctuations as well. But regardless of your situation, there are interventions you can explore to create a plan that will make a tremendous difference in getting you back on the road to comfortable, restful sleep. You can awaken to brighter tomorrows by improving your sleep tonight! **TN**

Look for a formula for overall SLEEP with these ingredients at your local health food store:

Proprietary Formula 150 mg
(Bio-Typed Plant Oils)
Marjoram (*Origanum majorana*), Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*), Mandarin (*Citrus reticulata zeste*), Ravintsara (*Cinnamomum camphora*), Lemon Verbena (*Lippia citrodora*)

Look for a formula for PAIN with these ingredients at your local health food store:

Proprietary EP612 Complex 2,181 mg
DLPA (dl Phenylalanine), Boswellia (*Boswellia serrata*) Extract standardized to contain >70% boswellic acids with >15% AKBA, Curcumin (*curcuma longa*) Extract standardized for curcuminoid complex (curcumin, demethoxycurcumin and bisdemethoxycurcumin), Nattokinase

Look for a formula for ANXIETY with these ingredients at your local health food store:

Narrow-leaved Coneflower Root 20 mg
(*Echinacea angustifoliae radix*) Extract standardized for biochemical fingerprint of proprietary echinacosides

Look for a formula for MOOD with these ingredients at your local health food store:

Proprietary Formula 125 mg
(Bio-Typed Plant Oils)
Mandarin (*Citrus reticulata*), Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), Exotic Verbena (*Litsea citrate*)

Look for a formula for MENOPAUSE with these ingredients at your local health food store:

Proprietary Formula 560 mg
Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*) Extract standardized to contain >60% polyphenols, patented Hop Cone (*Humulus lupulus L.*) Extract standardized for 8-prenylnaringenin, Black Cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) Root and Rhizome Extract standardized to contain 2.5% triterpene glycosides