



Chiropractic Miracles

Delivering You the Best Word in Wellness and Natural Health Care

Dr. Wendy Lanser, Doctor of Chiropractic Breakthrough Patient Newsletter...

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Dear Patient and Friend,

Scientists have known for years that walking is great exercise. Regular brisk walking can extend your lifespan up to twenty years! But a new study has shown that walking may offset the harmful effects of poor sleep patterns.

It's no secret to doctors of all kinds that not getting enough quality sleep interferes with not only your daily function, but also your longevity. Insufficient sleep may cost you years off your life. So, anything you can do to improve the way your body works could give you back those lost years.

A huge study in Australia and England followed 380,000 people over 11 years, and compared their exercise routines with their sleeping habits. They discovered that those who exercised consistently shook off many of the problems associated with bad sleep – in other words, even if they didn't sleep enough, exercise helped them to live longer and healthier.

Those who both exercised and slept well were even healthier still. But those who slept poorly and did not exercise were 60% more likely to die early, 70% more likely to get heart disease, and had a 45% greater risk of cancer.

The World Health Organization says adults over 18 should aim for either 150-300 minutes of moderate exercise each week, or 75-150 minutes of vigorous exercise each week. The sleep researchers agreed with this plan.

So, if you sleep well, good for you. But if you don't, develop a habit of walking briskly – it may save you unnecessary pain and help you to live a healthier life.

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Breathe Yourself To Better Sleep

It's clear that getting enough sleep is an important key to better health and longevity. That's because your brain cleans, maintains and recharges itself while you sleep, and if you don't get at least seven or eight hours every night, then your brain goes into a slightly stressed state, which over time can affect all body function.

So, it makes sense to arrange your schedule so that you can get a good night's sleep, but for some people, that's easier said than done. Some have trouble getting to sleep, some have trouble staying asleep, and some have trouble organizing their day to provide enough time for sleep.

Let's look more closely at this process. Your brain connects with your body through wires called nerves, and these nerves are arranged in a very specific way throughout your body. Some nerves are for voluntary control, like operating your muscles to walk, jump or dance. Others are designed to automatically manage your organs, like your heartbeat, your breathing and your digestion. Imagine if you had to remember to set your heart every morning! But no, it happens automatically.

The part of your nerve system that runs your automatic body functions is called your autonomic nerve system, and it has two parts, your sympathetic nerve system and your parasympathetic nerve system.

If you are in a stressful situation, like an argument for example, or you find yourself running away from a tiger chasing you, you are using your sympathetic nerve system, your "fight or flight" machinery.

If you are in a restful, recovery situation, like digesting your food after a satisfying meal, or getting well from a cold or illness, you are using your parasympathetic nerve system, your "rest and digest" or "rest and recover" machinery.

You need both, of course, but when you are trying to get to sleep, you want to use your parasympathetic nerve system -- it wouldn't make sense for you to be in fight or flight before bed, that's a highly excited state which requires wakefulness and intense focus, not a good environment for unwinding and getting some quality shuteye.

"If you are in a restful, recovery situation, like digesting your food after a satisfying meal, or getting well from a cold or illness, you are using your parasympathetic nerve system, your "rest and digest" or "rest and recover" machinery."

"I first came to Dr. Lanser with acute pain in my right shoulder & arm. I started seeing relief from the acute pain within a week. The treatment is very gentle. Dr. Lanser takes a holistic approach, which I found appealing. Overtime my acute & chronic problems improved and to my surprise, I have achieved even more flexibility, strength & comfort in my back than at any time in my adult life. Her holistic approach has allowed me to make changes to emotional & mental patterns that correspond to improvements in my back, neck, pelvis, chest, & legs. I appreciate the care & attention I have received, & the warm & welcoming atmosphere in the office."

-J.G. Menlo Park

Breathe Yourself To Better Sleep

Now, most of your autonomic functions are not under your control, but there is one that is – it's your breathing. Your breathing happens automatically without you thinking about it – it gets faster when you exercise and need more oxygen, slower when you meditate because your heart and body slow down. That happens automatically, but with breathing, if you like, you can seize conscious control, and breath faster, slower, deeper or shallower at will.

It turns out that this is a perfect way to tap into parasympathetic function, and get out of a fight or flight state and into a rest and recover state. When you pay attention to your breathing, your blood pressure goes down, your heart rate and stress hormones are reduced, and that creates the right state to fall asleep and heal and repair your brain and body. This all happens when the parasympathetic nerve system is at work.

Stress can lock you into sympathetic wakefulness. This is common -- as many as 33% of our neighbors have sleeping problems. They need a way to get to sleep and remain asleep. They could use breathing to get to parasympathetic dominance. Here are some ideas on how to use breathing to fall asleep and stay asleep.

Mobility and breathing expert Dana Santas recommends counting deep breaths backward. You've probably heard of counting sheep – that's designed to focus your mind away from whatever is bothering you. Counting breaths backward is even more effective because deep breathing takes you into a parasympathetic state.

Just get into bed, get comfortable, close your eyes, and imagine the number 20 as you inhale. Then, simply allow the number to fade away as you exhale. Then go to 19, then 18, and often you won't make it all the way down to 1. If you do, you can start at 30 or 40, whatever works, but doing this regularly will drive you into a parasympathetic, sleepy state.

Santas also recommends the work of Brandon Marcello, another sleep expert, who suggests a cool, dark room, and a "pre-sleep menu" of reading, listening to relaxing music, meditating, stretching or breathing. Whichever you choose, you always want to come back to breathing.

This may all seem very scientific, but nothing could be more natural than taking a nice, deep breath and letting it out. It could be as simple as that, to breathe yourself to better sleep. And if you want to know more about your brain and nerve system, ask Dr. Wendy Lanser doctor of chiropractic, your most trusted health and wellness advisor.

Sleeping With the TV On

If you sleep with your television on, you're not alone. A national survey done by LG Electronics found that 61% of those who responded ran their TV while they slept. Another study from the journal "Behavioral Sleep Medicine" discovered that 31% of Americans think of their TV as a sleep aid!

What's the truth about falling asleep with the TV on? It seems to be linked to an unwillingness to disconnect – in fact, a poll taken by the National Sleep Foundation, published in the "Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine," reported that 90% of us use some type of electronic device in the hour before turning in for the night, and as many as 60% of those watch TV in that last hour of their day. This may simply explain why so many people fall asleep with the TV on – it's the last thing they do before drifting off.

So is that bad? Well, depending on each individual, it can be harmless, or it can be detrimental. You see, even if your conscious mind goes to sleep, your subconscious mind is still paying attention to the sound of the television. This may stress your brain when it is trying to repair and replenish itself after your day's activities.

And, the content of the shows may seep into your dreams – it's common that when a violent or upsetting program is playing, sleeping individuals are more likely to have nightmares.

When it gets dark, your body naturally produces a chemical called melatonin, which helps you get to sleep. The blue light of a TV screen is known to interfere with melatonin production, which can alter your body's natural timing and rob you of deep, relaxing sleep. This tends to increase "sleep debt," a term used to define how much less sleep you get than you need. It even makes it more likely that you'll gain weight.

It just makes sense to learn to shut off your TV before you go to sleep, or at least put it on a timer – you'll safeguard your brain, and improve your health and longevity.

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