** Three more myths about sleep **

Sleep is extremely important as we spend about a third of our life doing it. There is so much information out there about sleep it’s enough to make your head spin. Here, we dispel some of the common myths about sleeping.

**Myth 5: Exercising at night will help you sleep**

Fact: People who exercise regularly tend to sleep better, says Gerhman. “However, if you exercise too close to bed it elevates your core body temperature and may make it tough to fall asleep. It's best to avoid aerobic exercise in the 1 to 2 hours before you go to bed. Light stretching or yoga closer to bed is usually okay.”

There is no set physiology related to sleep and exercise which applies to everyone, although in general, exercise is in itself a healthy behavior and promotes sleep, another healthy behavior, says Basner. “For some, exercising in the evening indeed is helpful – but, more often, is stimulating, and for most of us a better option is to exercise first thing in the morning. Fitting exercise into your lifestyle is so important, though, that you should try to figure out if you are a ‘morning’ or an ‘evening’ person and fit your exercise time around your best sleep timing. For example, if you fall asleep early easily and awaken early, exercising in the morning is likely best. Morning exercise, particularly in the warmer months when you are likely to get dawn light into your eyes if you go outside, has the added benefit of ‘resetting’ your circadian clock to promote being able to sleep at a good time later that evening.”

**Myth 6: Drinking a warm glass of milk or herbal tea will help you fall asleep**

Fact: There is very little evidence of specific foods helping or interfering with sleep, says Gerhman. “What is known is that you don't want to go to bed hungry or on a full stomach. Having a light snack before bed can be helpful for finding this middle ground.”

Again, sleep behaviors and effects vary with individuals, says Basner. “Both milk and tea contain chemicals that tend to promote sleep: milk has tryptophan and green tea has theanine, both agents which may help sleep.”

**Myth 7: Alcohol helps you sleep**

Fact: Alcohol in sufficient quantities will put you to sleep, says Gerhman. “However, as your body metabolizes alcohol, the chemicals that are produced break up the quality of sleep and can lead to being awake in the middle of the night. So the sleep you get with alcohol is usually not restful. Plus using alcohol in this way increases the chances of becoming dependent on alcohol.”

While alcohol at night will generally promote falling asleep more quickly, chronic use can promote complete loss of slow-wave (deep) sleep and it also inhibits rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, says Basner. “Alcohol also greatly promotes upper airway closure in sleep and can worsen the tendency to have obstructive sleep apnea, a very common and potentially life threatening medical condition and also may cause gastric acid reflux. Overall, alcohol is a very poor choice for a sleep promoting agent and alcohol moderation and avoidance within 4 hours of desired sleep time is generally a part of a healthy sleep prescription.”

Source: <http://www.sleepeducation.com/news/2012/10/29/sleep-myths-separating-fact-from-fiction>

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