APRIL: The Importance of Sleep

Sleep is a major part of how we spend our time. However, we often aren't making the most of it. Making a few changes to your nighttime routine can have a major impact on your sleep quality. Keep reading to learn some simple tips!

Maintain a regular sleep schedule.

It can be easy to sleep in on weekends, but science shows that you'll have better sleep overall if you set a consistent sleep and wake time. This helps your brain's circadian rhythm balance.

Establish a relaxing bedtime routine that doesn't include screens.

Instead of watching TV until you fall asleep, try establishing a relaxing routine that includes things such as soaking in a hot bath, reading a book, or listening to soothing music. Whether you're working on your laptop or catching up on TV, turn screens off at least 30 minutes before bed. The blue light emitted by these devices reduces the production of melatonin.

Additionally, avoid activities that may be stressful before bed, such as playing video games or paying bills.

Create the right environment.

A sleep-conducive environment should be dark, quiet, and cool. During the summer, when days are longer, you can use blackout curtains and eye shades to create a dark environment. Ear plugs, white noise machines, and fans can also upgrade your space.

Sleep on a comfortable mattress.

The average lifespan for a good quality mattress is about 10 years.

Use your bedroom only for sleep.

This will strengthen the association between your bed and sleep. Leave work materials and electronics out of the bedroom.

Finish eating 2-3 hours before bedtime.

Eating or drinking too much can negatively affect your sleep. Some people find that a light snack is helpful but avoid heavy or greasy foods.

Exercise regularly.

Late afternoon exercise is the perfect way to help you fall asleep. Do not exercise within 3 hours of your bedtime so you can allow your body to cool down and relax.

Avoid nicotine, caffeine, and alcohol before bedtime.

Caffeine typically remains in the body for 3 to 5 hours, but it can affect some people longer. Nicotine is also a stimulant, and when smokers go to sleep, they may experience withdrawal symptoms that can cause sleep problems.

Many people think of alcohol as a sedative, and although it can help you fall asleep, it may also cause you to frequently awaken during the night. Avoid alcohol 4-6 hours before bed.

Set aside time to actively address worries and actively relax.

Condition yourself to avoid taking the troubles of the day to bed. If you have a lot of things on your mind, make a written list of them and what you plan to do. List making is an excellent stress-reducing strategy and can promote sleep.

After making your list, set it aside and try to do something relaxing prior to bedtime.

Source: The Sleep Wellness Institute