Covid and Stress – Sleep on it!

Everyone needs high-quality sleep. Since the release of a 2017 study that demonstrated the link between sleep and stress, there has been growing recognition of the restorative power of sleep to improve mental and physical health. However, sleep is not something we specifically manage to maintain good health for many of us. Like breathing, we do sleep without consideration to regularities of time, preparation, or other good sleep habits. Too often, sleep comes from exhaustion, which we find ourselves in daily.

In a follow-up to the 2017 study, researchers have made clear cause and effects links between sleep, stress, and our immune system. Over time, the vicious circle of stress and poor sleep affects our immune systems and increases our susceptibility and ability to recover from infections, such as Covid.

The case for getting more and better sleep has never been more evident or more important!

Sleep Facts:
- Between seven and nine hours of sleep are needed every night.
- You cannot 'bank' sleep. Waiting for a time to catch up is not a remedy for sleep deprivation.
- A sleep 'debt' (chronic under sleeping or low-quality sleep) can lead to health problems such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and depression
- Watching an electronic screen does not induce sleep but happens despite this.
- The light effects of electronics awaken the brain and should be kept out of the bedroom.
- A good indicator of exhaustion is hitting the pillow and waking up the next day. Having a lag time of about 15 minutes before falling asleep is an indicator of good sleep health.

Sleep Tips:
- Establish a routine! Set sleep times and wake times, and transition routines to sleep times. Keep the routine in the weekends
- Your bedroom is a sanctuary – tv off, digital clocks turned away, etc.
- Read relaxing material before bed and allow enough time to adjust to lights off
- Create routines so that you glide rather than stumble from exhaustion into sleep.
- Waking in the middle of the night is considered normal if you return to sleep in about 15 minutes. If you are lying awake for longer spells, get up and do light chores or a few relaxing (no computer) activities and return to bed in a relaxed state.
- Limit daytime naps in time and frequency – replace (if possible) with physical activity.

References:
https://www.sleepfoundation.org/

February 2022