

Other Factors That Affect Sleep

Caffeine: It is no surprise that caffeine can affect your sleep. It is usually something we use to wake up and feel alert and get through an afternoon slump. Caffeine in various levels is found in many products like coffee, tea, energy drinks, soda, chocolate and some medications like the headache medicine Excedrin. Caffeine blocks brain chemistry that induces sleep so avoid ingesting too close to bedtime.

NOTE: Did you know that it can take up to 6-8 hours for your body to metabolize caffeine by 50%. Stop caffeine intake by 2pm!

Alcohol: It may not be unusual to have a glass of wine at dinner or a nightcap before bed. However, drinking alcohol too close to bedtime inhibits proper sleep. You may fall asleep faster due to its sedative properties, however, people who drink before bed often experience disruptions later in their sleep cycle. One explanation is that the production of adenosine (a chemical in the brain that acts as a sleep-inducer) increases while drinking, allowing you to go to sleep quickly; however, this chemical quickly subsides, making you more likely to wake up throughout the night. Researchers at the Alzheimer's Science of Prevention recommend giving yourself 3 hours between your last drink and bedtime.

NOTE: Did you know that lack of sleep affects the body the same way drinking alcohol does. After 17 hours without sleep, your alertness is similar to the effects of a blood alcohol concentration of 0.05% which is above the legally limit.

Stress: Stress affects both the quantity and quality of your sleep. At heightened state of alertness, the flight or fight reaction can delay the onset of sleep, cause your mind to race, and wake you up throughout the night. Experiencing this frequently causes additional stress which as mentioned earlier sends a surge of the stress hormone cortisol.

What are the effects of excess cortisol?

- Rapid heart rate
- Spike in blood sugar
- Rapid breathing
- Sharpened senses
- Mood swings
- Fluence digestion and metabolism

Research shows that diets high in animal fats, refined sugar, salt, and fat (all the things your sleepy brain craves) lead to high levels of cortisol. Compared to a diet rich in vegetables and fruits, aka Real Food which promotes normal production thus better sleep.

