

# An Alternative Approach for Overcoming a Sleep Disorder

Having a sleep disorder can be very disruptive to everyday life. Sleep deprived people are usually excessively tired and sleepy. They tend to become irritable and very emotional. At times they become a danger, not only to themselves, but also to those around them.

Some people use alternative, natural ways to lessen the effects of their sleep disorder. Many people focus on diet and nutrition, while others use herbs and supplements. Still others believe in the positive effect of exercise, relaxation and sensory techniques, meditation or behavioral and cognitive strategies. Often people use a combination of these approaches to help alleviate the symptoms of their sleep disorder.

A healthy diet is essential for optimal energy and a restful sleep. Avoiding certain foods is as important as including others in your daily diet. Eating a wide variety of foods and drinking plenty of water will keep your body well-balanced and provide a more stable energy level. Avoiding food that is grown, treated or processed with chemicals, and limiting the amount of sugar and caffeine will also help your overall physical condition. Many foods promote a restful sleep and are helpful in relieving some of the symptoms of certain sleep disorders. Eating the proper snack before bedtime can increase natural serotonin levels. Serotonin acts as a natural sedative and is made in the body from the amino acid tryptophan. Foods that are rich in tryptophan include chicken, turkey, cheese, cottage cheese, fish, milk, nuts, avocados and bananas.

Many people use herbs and natural supplements as an alternative approach to treating their sleep disorder. There are many nutritional supplements and herbal products on the market. It is important to know how a specific product acts on

the body as well as on the specific sleep disorder.. For example many people with restless leg syndrome have an iron or folic acid deficiency. Taking an iron supplement may alleviate some of the symptoms of RLS. Many herbs are well known for promoting a natural sleep. A clamming tea of chamomile or lemon balm can be very relaxing to many people that suffer from a sleep disorder.

Exercise and relaxation techniques, whether used alone or together, can reduce stress and muscle tension. Many people that use these techniques to lessen the symptoms of a sleep disorder do these before going to bed. They not only ease physical tension but they calm the mind and prepare the body to sleep. These techniques include mindful exercise, progressive muscle relaxation, breathing exercises and yoga.

Meditation and visualization are also used by some sufferers of sleep disorders to calm the body before sleep. Two common forms of mediation are meditation on the breath and mantra meditation. Both of these types can have a positive effect on relieving stress and calming the body. Many people focus their energy on a healing visualization as a method of alternative therapy for their sleep disorder.

Sensory techniques that people use to lessen the symptoms of their sleep disorder are hydrotherapy, and aroma therapy. The two main techniques included in hydrotherapy, which means water therapy, are relaxing in an Epsom salt bath and a lymph stimulating footbath. Aroma therapy includes the use of therapeutic essential oils in baths, massage oils, room sprays, and simple inhalants.

Alternative practices and techniques can help many types of sleep disorders. Often they are used in conjunction with traditional medication and practices.