

Dreaming of a Good Night's Sleep? Theanine to the Rescue

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Almost half of all Americans go about their daily lives deprived of sleep. These days, a restful eight hour night's sleep has become a rare luxury to millions of people.

Sleep is the ultimate rejuvenation elixir. During deep sleep, brain activity that controls emotions, decision-making processes, and social interaction shuts down, allowing us to maintain optimal emotional and social functioning when we are awake.

A night's sleep also plays a critical role in strengthening the body's immune defenses. One of the body's most powerful cancer fighters, called tumor necrosis factor, increases tenfold during a good night's sleep. This is also the stage when cell growth and cell repair takes place.

Any health assault is withstood with a strong immune system. In one study volunteers were vaccinated against hepatitis A infection. When they had a good night's sleep afterwards, they showed a stronger immune response to the vaccine. In fact, the well-rested group on average had nearly twice the antibody level of the sleep-deprived group.

The quantity and quality of sleep impacts many health problems. For example, insufficient sleep affects growth hormone secretion that is linked to obesity; as the amount of hormone secretion decreases, the chance for weight gain increases. In addition, insufficient sleep impairs the body's ability to use insulin, which can contribute to the onset of diabetes.

Scientists have found increased blood levels of stress hormones in people with chronic insomnia, suggesting that these individuals suffer from sustained, round the clock activation of the body's system for responding to stress. In fact, insomniacs have increased production of the stress hormone cortisol, which not only prevents them from sleeping but also leads to depression, high blood pressure, obesity, osteoporosis and hormonal imbalances such as PMS, infertility and menopausal symptoms.

However, reaching for that bottle of prescription sleep medications such as sleeping pills, tranquilizers may not be your best choice. They not only shut down the brain but also prevent the mind from relaxing and recuperating causing people to feel groggy or "out of it", upon waking. These medications also have numerous side effects and can be addictive.



Fortunately, there's now an effective, natural solution found on your health food store self that will not only help you get your quota of forty winks but will reduce sleep-robbing stress as well.

Tea drinking has been a popular drink in Asian countries., Asians enjoy their daily tea drinking ritual for its many benefits, including its calming influence on the mind and body.

Fifty years ago the Japanese discovered that tea leaves contain an amino acid called L-theanine which has amazing relaxing effects One of L-theanine's healthy effects is its ability to initiate an alpha brain wave pattern in the brain which signifies an alert, relaxed physical and mental state without drowsiness or impairment of motor skills. In addition, an alpha state helps to improve learning and concentration, strengthens the immune system and alleviates stressed induced hormonal imbalances.

Studies have found an increased alpha brain wave pattern just 30 to 40 minutes after consuming 50-200 mg of a theanine supplement.

A recent clinical trial in Japan proved L-theanine's ability to promote quality sleep. When 200mg of L-Theanine was taken before bedtime, it enhanced the quality of actual sleep of all the subjects. In fact, all the participants reported a significant absence of "feeling exhausted" and a reduced need for sleep.

In addition, the study showed that L-theanine produced a notable improvement of what is known as sleep efficiency, an index of actual sleep time enjoyed between the time of falling asleep and the final morning awakening. To add icing to the cake, test subjects also reported a superior mental state prior to falling asleep and a decreased occurrence of nightmares.

The study confirmed that theanine improves the quality of sleep by allowing the mind, while in a sleep state, to fully relax and recuperate. This is why the subjects did not report feeling groggy but rather were refreshed and alert upon waking.

Without any known side effects, L-theanine is truly an answer to the prayers of the bleary-eyed who will finally be able to "sleep and, perchance, dream" – soundly and peacefully.

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