

SONNO

Sonno — Quarterly Newsletter

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Did you know that the average number of hours a person spends asleep during a lifetime is 220,000?

Web Sites of Interest

- sleepanddreams.com
- tarotcanada.ca
- wvgargoyle.bittersweetcandle.com
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A Hard Night's Day

The first long night I can remember was when I was fourteen, sitting at the kitchen table at four in the morning, glass of milk in hand, listening to the buzz of the refrigerator. *How could I be so awake when everyone else is asleep?*

If you're anything like me, and an estimated one in ten Canadians, this is a familiar tale. Insomnia is one of the most common disorders, and it can have serious side-effects. Researchers in Australia and New Zealand have found that sleep deprivation can impair the mind just as much as alcohol can. Yet while most people recognize

the potential dangers of alcohol, few realize the impact of a sleepless night. And for insomniacs, these long nights are a fact of life.

My sleepless nights subsided until the next spring, when two cheerleaders at my school were killed by a freight train, on tracks just around the corner from the student parking lot. It happened at lunch hour, and everyone was outside because it was such a beautiful day. I didn't cry; I couldn't. But for the next few months, the vision and sound of the train haunted my nights and scared away the sandman.

I was prescribed sleeping



Deep sleep is needed for the body to repair itself.

pills, which had little effect. Then one night my younger brother Dave, said something that would prove more effective than any pill: "What's the big deal? It's just sleeping. It's easy. Just lie down in bed and close your eyes." It worked.

The insomnia bounced back a few times during
(Continued on page 3)

Somnoplasty May Be Your Answer to Snoring

Snoring can be caused by a variety of things. It is best diagnosed with a monitored, overnight test at a sleep disorder center. It can be due to obesity, alcohol consumption and smoking. In these cases, changes to lifestyle make the biggest difference. Occasionally, snoring is caused by apnea a disorder that requires the use of a positive airway pressure

mask worn while sleeping. Most snoring can be caused by an enlarged soft palate and uvula at the back of the mouth. As the body relaxes during sleep the floppy tissue vibrates. In these cases, snoring may be treated with Somnoplasty.

Somnoplasty is a procedure performed by an Ear Nose and Throat specialist while the patient is under lo-

cal anesthesia. The use of low temperature radio frequency energy is targeted at well-defined surface layers of the soft palate called mucosa. The area is heated until coagulation. Within four to six weeks the body naturally removes the treated tissue. This reduces the volume and stiffens the
(Continued on page 5)

Back Pain? A New Mattress Could Help.

Back pain is a common complaint especially when trying to get comfortable in bed. Recent studies have shown that choosing the right type of mattress may go a long way to decrease the stress on those aching back muscles. The correct physiological position for the spine while standing relaxed is shoulders back and pelvis tucked in with a slight "s" position if viewed from the side. The researchers looked for this position in the subjects as they lay on nine different beds; a foam mattress, four types of inner spring mattresses, a full-flotation waterbed and three hybrid waterbeds. (Hybrids are covered and padded to more closely

resemble regular mattresses).

When lying in the full flotation or hybrid waterbeds the subjects' back muscles were significantly strained. Their position resembled a body in a hammock due to the weight of the shoulder and hip areas. The back muscles would struggle all night to try and correct his unnatural spinal position causing a restless sleep and back and neck stiffness in the morning.

The foam mattresses were better, giving the best support to shoulders. However, this extra support left the lower back drooping causing the shoulders to arch to correct the sag in the lower back.

The Sleeper's Market



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The inner spring mattresses provided the best support no matter the degree of firmness. The springs support the heavier body parts such as the shoulders and hips without letting them sink

too far, allowing the spine to stay in the supine position and causing the least amount of muscles strain.

Sleeping During Pregnancy

Pregnancy is a wonderful event in life but like most great accomplishments it comes with some sacrifice. Sleep and your usual sleep patterns are compromised. In the first stages of pregnancy you can still sleep in the same position with little physical discomfort but you just can't seem to get enough sleep. Daytime sleepiness may even effect your workday. Then as you reach the 29th week, sleep problems become more physical. Daytime sleepiness increase is caused by an actual lack of night sleep often due to the changes in the body.

Women who were back and tummy sleepers will often find it especially hard to get comfortable once in the third trimester. Lying on your back is not recommended because of

the possibility of reduced oxygen flow to the baby; also, it may cause a compression of the vena cava (vein that carries blood from the lower body back to the heart). Not to mention the extra pressure on the already aching lower back. Sleeping on the stomach becomes almost impossible once the baby is larger and can cause excess pressure on the fetus. Generally, it is best to sleep on your side during pregnancy.

The simple fact that you are carrying around extra weight makes you more tired and less comfortable. Not to mention the baby may be compressing your lungs making it harder to breath. The bladder also gets compressed and will probably wake you a few times in the

night, and even the baby moving inside you. Understandably, the anticipation of the big day can make a person nervous and restless too.

Luckily there are a few things one can do to increase the odds of getting a good night sleep. The positive side of being at this stage of pregnancy is that you are near the end and the reward will soon arrive.

- Stop drinking a couple of hours before bed and try to empty your bladder right before crawling into bed.
- Moderate exercise early in the evening can help, but not right before bedtime.
- Avoid meals too close to bedtime to decrease heartburn.
- Use extra pillows wherever you need support, between the

knees for sore hips, under the side of your belly, behind your back - there are even specially contoured pillows for pregnancy.

- Relax- whatever makes you feel good, a warm bath, warm milk, listen to soft music etc.
- And if you just can't stay asleep don't force it, try reading for a little while then try again.

Did you know that a newborn baby may spend 16 hours asleep in a 24-hour period?

A Hard Night's Day (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

high school, lasting anywhere from a week to a month. But throughout most of university, it remained dormant. Last fall, it returned with a vengeance.

I don't know if it was September 11 that set it off, or the stress of a final year at school, but all of a sudden I was awake again. For six straight days. By day three, I was losing my mind.

I saw a vampire in the grocery store, shadows of people in an empty hall, words in books that just weren't there. And I felt things too. One night I was so convinced that I broke my jaw on a piece of pizza, that I woke my boyfriend to ask him to drive me to the hospital. I was constantly falling and hurting myself. There were shivers, headaches and nausea. I couldn't finish a sentence or a complete thought, so I stopped answering the phone and going to school.

And for the first time ever, life was a chore.

According to sleep experts, my experience was the result of too much wear, and not enough repair, on my body and mind. Sleep regulates body chemicals, improves memory, fights infection, controls temperature and repairs tissue. Without this nightly rejuvenation, I was a mess. Different sleep stages also have different roles in maintaining the body. Deep sleep is needed for the body to repair itself, though it's not clear exactly how it does this. REM sleep (rapid eye movement) has been credited as the stage for remembering, forgetting and dreaming, among other cognitive activities.

Sleep deprivation can cause mental problems because of sleep's role in regulating and restoring the chemicals in our brain. Throughout the day, serotonin, a chemical partly responsible for regulating mood and perception, builds up in our brain, making us feel tired. As we sleep, the chemical is released and balance is restored, leaving us feeling refreshed the next day. Without sleep, there is an imbalance of serotonin and other neurotransmitters that control vital bodily functions.

This chemical imbalance could be the explanation for my frightening hallucinations after three days of no sleep, says Clint Marquardt, a consultant with the Center for Sleep and Dream Studies in Ottawa (www.SleepandDreams.com).

"My own hypothesis for those interesting experiences that can happen when you're sleep deprived is that because serotonin has a similar structure to LSD, too much of it can cause very similar experiences."

Well, it was a strange trip, but thankfully not a long one.

My doctor prescribed me some pills, saying they would "break the cycle." Though I finally had some rest, the cycle was far from over. I am still taking them.

However, all cycles have a beginning, and for insomnia, understanding the cause may lead to a personal cure. For some people, irregular work hours or jet lag may trigger insomnia. For others, caffeine sensitivity, nicotine, illness, lifestyle or medications could play a role. And demographically, more women than men feel they are sleep deprived. A recent poll commissioned by the Canadian Press suggested that one in four Canadian women cannot get a good night's sleep, compared to one in five men. Sleep specialists say more women than men report insomnia, though whether this is due to social reasons or a real propensity is unclear.

PMS can cause insomnia, as can pregnancy and breast-feeding. In a 2001 Statistics Canada survey, 61 per cent of women reported feeling stressed from trying to balance family life with their jobs, compared to 39 per cent of men. And

while the passage of time can ease some of these demands, aging presents some new obstacles for women. The hot flashes of menopause can make it hard to fall asleep, and frequent awakenings can interrupt a refreshing, deep sleep. A common cause of insomnia is the body's response to stress – both physical and mental. "When the initial stress is gone, the problem remains because your mind and

body have learned a new pattern."

Marquardt says this pattern is a state of "conditioned arousal" that occurs after a couple bad nights when the mind begins to associate the bed with being awake, despite having resolved the initial worry.

"Not to sound simplistic, but it's like Pavlov's dogs. The same thing can happen in humans. If you pair the bed with mental arousal, especially when you add in that negative emotion that comes from not sleeping, your brain thinks; 'Hey, I should be awake now.'"

And so the cycle begins. Marquardt says the brain could then go into a chronically aroused state, paired with physical problems. "Once insomnia really kicks in, the physical problems can cause more stress. Things like gastrointestinal problems, and all the performance-related issues..."

This clear mind-body connection is perhaps what makes insomnia such an ambiguous disorder. While a common trigger may be mental stress, the problem soon becomes physical, presenting a new reason to lie awake worrying at night.

The people who suffer the most seem to be suffering in

**...the most
common cause
of insomnia is
conditioned
arousal...**

A Hard Night's Day (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

silence. They don't feel comfortable talking about it. The burden is lighter when they can talk about it. Some are talking about it in cyberspace, on insomnia chat rooms and message boards. Most entries are time-stamped in the early morning hours, with desperate cries of: "How do I stop this thing?... I thought I had spiders in my hair! ... How can I get off these pills?... Today was rough....No sleep all week...I had to quit my job...Why is this happening to ME?"

I wish there was Internet access in the house when I was 16 and sleepless. When the night boredom became irresistible, I would call up sleeping friends, or as a last resort, make a noise to wake up my family. Not even for conversation, but just to hear a squeak or shuffle before they fell back to sleep. I wanted to find other night owls, but except for my yowling cat, there were none to be found.

A poll conducted by the American National Sleep Foundation in 2000 found that 27 per cent of the respondents felt sleepy at least two days out of the work week. And of those people, 68 per cent said this affected their ability to perform on the job.

"Many people who are lying in bed awake will say to themselves; 'I won't be able to cope tomorrow at work' and they keep looking at their clock," say the sleep specialists. This performance anxiety can perpetuate the insomnia, and continue the spiral.

This pattern is what sleep specialists try to break at their sleep clinics. After ruling out physical causes using polysomnograph monitoring (hooking people up to wires and observing their brain waves during sleep), they focus on re-training the person to sleep through behavioural and lifestyle changes.

"There's nothing magical or weird about it. People have been sleeping for millennia," says Marquardt.

Which is perhaps why my brother's advice to 'just do it' was so effective. As long as I was thinking about my difficulty sleeping, or how to sleep, it never came.

Teaching people how to relax can take time, which is why behavioural therapy lasts for at least a month. But for some insomniacs, behavioural changes take too long to show results. For these people, sleep medications may be the only help in sight. An estimated ten per cent of Canadians use pills to fall asleep and Marquardt says

that at most sleep clinics, pills are the only help offered to insomniacs, when they can be used very effectively in conjunction with behavioural therapy.

Experts agree that most older tranquilizers can cause rebound insomnia, where stopping the drug makes the problem worse. This means a person must continue taking them, or face the effects of withdrawal. Many older generation sleep aids also cause a hangover feeling the next day says Marquardt. "These pills don't give you a normal sleep. They act as major depressants on the entire brain and can interfere with deep sleep." Marquardt also goes on to say that the newer sleep medications like Starnoc (Zaleplon) are very effective when used properly and are combined with behavioural therapy, "Starnoc does not interfere with deep sleep, it does not cause rebound effects or withdrawal, and it can be used for extended periods of time without developing tolerance."

Sleep-deprivation due to sleep disorders like insomnia is gradually gaining more recognition and understanding, partly due to extensive coverage of fatigue-related tragedies, such as the Exxon Valdez oil spill, the destruction of the space shuttle Challenger, the nuclear accident at Chernobyl, and long-haul trucking accidents. "There's much more awareness [of sleep deprivation] now because of all the information technology that's out there, like the Internet," say sleep experts. "The sheer number of sleep labs springing up all over the place shows we're becoming more aware. Consumers are demanding better treatment."

In Ottawa, there are six sleep clinics. The Canadian Sleep Society lists close to 100 for the entire country. Most provincial health insurance plans cover sleep clinics, and some workplaces are even promoting napping as a way to relieve fatigue.

In the last few years, sleep clinics have seen an increase in the number of patients they see who report insomnia. Whether this represents new cases, or just a new awareness of the problem, it means that more people are realizing the importance of sleep, and their right to have it.

My journey with insomnia is not over yet. I'm still on the meds, and while many nights are good – some are bad. Yoga has been helpful, and visualizing a sun-dappled forest trail, though boring, has seemed to calm me down. Tonight I might try sniffing an onion before bed, a remedy

A Hard Night's Day (cont.)

(Continued from page 4)

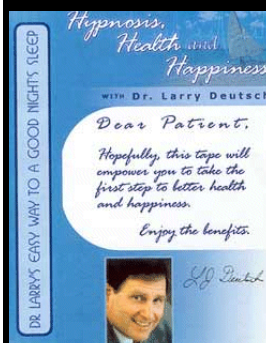
I found on the Internet.

But for all its drawbacks, insomnia is a part of who I am. Without it, there would have been less time to read books, draw pictures, watch infomercials and ponder the mysteries of life. When I sleep well, I actually miss the long quiet night, and the vacation it can offer from a hurried life. But too much of anything can drive a person crazy.

As dusk falls, that voice in my head chides; *You won't sleep tonight. And you'll feel horrible tomorrow. Don't even try.* Maybe the voice is right. But I control my own destiny, and it's time to take back the night. I respond to the voice: **I will** sleep, and it's about time you did too! Sweet dreams.

M. Maran, Journalism Student, 2001.

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Somnoplasty May Be Your Solution (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

area causing the snoring. The procedure often takes less than thirty minutes and within a month it will gradually lessen your snoring. The only side effect may be some

swelling or discomfort, similar to the symptoms of an oncoming cold. These should not last more than a few days. Depending on the severity of your snoring Somnoplasty may need to be

repeated but it is a virtually painless procedure with a fast recovery due to the protective lining of the palate.

If snoring is keeping you or your partner up at night don't let it go undiagnosed.

There are options available today to treat a variety of the causes. See your doctor and they can refer you to your nearest sleep disorder clinic.



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