TO YOUR HEALTH

WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

MOVE MORE IN THE DAY

...Sleep Better at Night

It's easy to sit for long periods of time, especially for those of us who have jobs that require us to sit behind a desk or behind a wheel. But, making a conscious effort to sprinkle in more movement throughout the day can have major health benefits—and one of them is better quality sleep.

There's a lot of research suggesting that if you want to sleep better you should start moving. For more than two decades scientists have been able to demonstrate that exercise does indeed help adults get to sleep faster and stay asleep longer. A study published in *Mental Health and Physical Activity* found that 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity a week provided a 65 percent improvement in sleep quality. People in the study also said they felt less sleepy during the day, compared to those with less physical activity.

Physical activity has been proven to help alleviate and manage stress, anxiety, and even depression—which are all conditions that can rob you of quality sleep. Exercise can also just plain and simple tire you out, making your mind and body welcome sleep and also stay asleep.

HOW MUCH IS NEEDED?

Experts recommend adults get at least 150 minutes (two and a half hours) of moderate physical activity each week. If you do more intense exercise like running, aim for at least 75 minutes a week.

Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

When it comes to sleep, research varies on the exercise time and duration it takes to realize positive impacts on your sleep. Some research suggests that 150 minutes of activity a week will help you sleep better while other studies show that as little as 10 minutes of exercise like walking or cycling can dramatically improve the quality of your sleep. At the end of the day, any activity is better than none, and the more activity you can perform on a daily basis, the better (this is true for your entire well-being, not just sleep).

It is important to note that you shouldn't expect results overnight (especially if you suffer from insomnia or another sleep condition). Scientists have found that the benefits of exercise on your sleep do indeed develop, but may take several weeks to kick in.

WHEN'S THE BEST TIME TO EXERCISE?

You may have heard or read that exercising too close to bedtime can interfere with your sleep. However, recent

research reveals that this may not be the case. There was the thought that working out vigorously too close to bedtime may over-stimulate your body, making it difficult to fall asleep. Now some experts have found that it actually depends on the individual.

If you find that physical activity in the evening makes it difficult for you to wind down, try to do it earlier in the day or perhaps decrease the intensity. If you find that evening exercise tires you out and makes you feel tired and ready for bed, then you should certainly keep up with that routine.

HOW TO MOVE MORE

Physical activity doesn't mean you have to go to the gym. Getting more active can include simple things like carrying your groceries or taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Meeting the 150-minute goal may seem overwhelming. But you can start with a few minutes at a time.

Here are some tips for making your day more active:

» Set specific goals for your physical activity. This increases the likelihood that you'll meet them.

» Take the stairs instead of the elevator.

» Park your car at the far end of the street or parking lot.

» Make your screen time more active. Set up your space so you can walk on a treadmill while watching TV or stand when using the computer.

» Try an online exercise class to stay active from home.

» Set an alarm to go off every hour as a reminder to move around for a minute or two.

» Have small weights in your office or around your home for doing arm exercises.

» Take a walk on your lunch breaks. Or have "walking meetings" with colleagues at work.