

# Sleep Awareness Month

Issue 1

April 2010

## Sleeping Well Can Help Keep You Well

Research over the last 10 years is accumulating that sleep deprivation can compromise the strength of our immune system. One way of studying this is by looking at the antibody response to vaccinations. After receiving a vaccination for hepatitis A virus, one group of subjects got their regular sleep, while another group stayed awake all night. HAV antibody response was measured repeatedly for 28 days. The sleepers had nearly a two-fold increase in response compared to those who were sleep deprived. The researchers found that sleep following the vaccination increased several immune-stimulating hormones. In a different study, researchers found that insomniacs had decreased natural killer cell activity.

Clearly, getting the recommended number of hours of sleep per night is an important step toward strengthening our natural immunological defenses.

## Sleep Apnea

-this is a disorder where breathing is briefly and repeatedly interrupted during sleep and affects more than 18 million American adults

-the "apnea" refers to a breathing pause that lasts at least 10 seconds

- usually occurs when the muscles in back of throat fail to keep airway open or brains fails to properly control breathing during sleep which may cause fragmented sleep and low blood oxygen levels

-symptoms include: chronic snoring & sleep deprivation which may lead to difficulty concentrating, depression, irritability, learning and memory difficulties, falling asleep while at work, on the phone, or driving

-If you suspect you may have sleep apnea the first thing to do is see your doctor

-There are highly effective treatments for sleep apnea including a continuous positive airway pressure device (CPAP) and lifestyle changes

### For more information:

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/sleep-related-problems/obstructive-sleep-apnea-and-sleep>

## Got Sleep?

### Tips for sleeping well as a college student & beyond:

- 1) Establish a routine- waking up and go to sleep at approximately the same time each day will train your body's sleep/awake cycles
- 2) Napping - this interferes with the establishment of a normal sleep routine (although it may facilitate memory!)
- 3) Use your bed for sleeping- again train your body to associate your bed with sleeping and not studying, reading etc.
- 4) Eating- avoid caffeine, nicotine and other stimulants 4-6 hours prior to bedtime; eating a large meal may also keep you up but snacks are generally fine
- 5) Alcohol should also be avoided even though it is a depressant and makes you sleepy, you will not get restful sleep under the influence of alcohol
- 6) Exercise- exercising consistently will help you sleep more deeply; however the timing of the exercise sessions and its effect on sleep is individual
- 7) Light- darken the room, not only when sleeping but also as you prepare for sleep... it is especially important to turn off bright overhead lights which can fool your body into thinking it's "daytime"
- 8) Temperature- the ideal temperature is a warm bed in a cool, approximately 60 degree room
- 9) Noise- background instrumental music, earplugs, and white noise machines are strategies that can be used to mask noise beyond control
- 10) Distractions- put the alarm clock where you can't see it, turn off cell phone and computer so they don't wake you in the night

Engle Center Booklet "Got Sleep?", <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/sleep-related-problems/obstructive-sleep-apnea-and-sleep>; Brain, Behavior and Immunity 17(5), 365-72; Psychosomatic Medicine 65(5), 831-5