

How to Obtain Drug-Free, Restorative Sleep: A Primer

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Between 15 to 20 million Americans suffer from serious sleep disorders. Tens of millions more suffer for lesser levels of sleeplessness, insomnia, sleep apnea, et al. It is big business, and vested interest in marketing this DEA Class IV narcotics in all their forms as harmless, healthy, and offering restorative sleep. All of them slow mental processing, both during the day and at night. All are in the tranquilizer category medications, and as the body adapts, dosage *must* increase or they lose the desired effects--in time, they keep you from truly sleeping (being groggy and unconscious is NOT sleep--- look at their side-effects as listed in the reference books!). All are very toxic for the liver--over time. The damage to the liver can be permanent and debilitating, especially when these medications are taken with alcohol, as they often are. All of them are have terrible long-term side/interaction/withdrawal effects. They almost always eventually lead to different forms of psychosis and depression.

But get this: Sleeping medication does not give you restorative sleep. They induce various levels of unconsciousness and impaired mental processes. Stay as far away from them as you can, and if you are already addicted (dependent) to them, seek the help of a trained physician to come off them. There is so much data on the serious long-term effects of this class of medication that this is only a distillation.

Deep, restorative sleep. Where carbon dioxide is expelled and oxygen is brought into every cell of the body. Where one wakes up a half inch or more taller than when they went to bed. Where they awaken to see more clearly, to hear more sensitively, and every cell and organ is refreshed and ready for a vigorous, exciting day!

Likewise, a little known and even more rarely mentioned behavioral pattern of the human body involving resetting the sleep-wake cycle: You have photo (light) sensors behind your eyelids and behind the small of the knees that are designed to reset your internal biorhythm clock for waking. When natural light hit these light sensors for a period of about 10-15 minutes, your Reticular Activating System (RAS) of the brain transfers some of the functions it was monitoring during the night from autonomic control to conscious control. This, in turn, makes you awake, and over a period of about an hour your body's metabolism comes back up to full-speed with consciousness, hunger, thirst, and a strong propensity to get the day underway. If you always awaken in a dark room, you will not have this natural clock-setting advantage. Keep those drapes or blinds open toward the sun. In fact, if you have a choice, make sure your bedroom has an east facing window and you will train your body's neurological system to awaken with the sun. Such an important, little-known factor in sleep therapy that tranquilizers can never produce!

Here are some rules: Obtain the best, most comfortable bed and pillows you can afford. Establish your sleep-wake cycle by awakening with the sun; get plenty of sunshine during the day--not just artificial light. That is how your melatonin is produced--and you cannot sleep with it. Don't go to bed hungry, and don't go to bed after a large meal (you'll be sorry, if you do!). Don't nap after 5pm. Keep the room temperature cool. Lights out--completely out! Develop nightly rituals for getting ready for bed--wind-down. Avoid caffeine (you might sleep after that cup of coffee, but you won't sleep *restoratively*). Go to bed early and arise early. Don't sleep in (unless you want to be up all night!).

OK, if you have difficulty sleeping, here is an exercise to do before you go to bed:

- **Drink at least a half a glass of water**
- **Turn the lights low and sit on the side of your bed**
- **Sit straight, and relax for a minute or two**
- **Take a deep breath, a very deep breath**
- **Let it out slowly**
- **Take a second breath of air, deep as the last one**
- **Let it out slowly**
- **Take a third breath of air**
- **And let it out slowly**

On that third breath (if not before) you should have felt a signal travel down your spinal cord. It came from the pituitary gland, to the neck region, down the spinal cord to kidneys, where the signal was given to expel carbon dioxide and take in oxygen. If you now turn out the lights and remain relaxed, you should be able to go to sleep, and all through the night your body will give up the massive amounts of carbon dioxide (which also contribute to acid formation, weakness, and illness in the body) and bring in restorative oxygen into the body's organs and cells. You will awaken refreshed, taller, and healthier.