



Holistic Medical Centre

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Insomnia

Insomnia is a common problem year round but we have noticed that winter seems to be a particularly bad time of the year for sleep problems. As it happens there is a very good reason for this and that reason is an interesting hormone called Melatonin. **Melatonin** is the hormone that tells your body when it should be asleep as well as regulating the deeper cycles of sleep. The action of sunlight on the eyes is the stimulus for the production of melatonin in the brain. The melatonin is stored in the brain during the day and released at night. The stimulus for the release of melatonin is soft fading light. To promote good sleep get outside as much as you can without sunglasses whenever possible. Avoiding bright flickering lights such as computer screens and televisions for at least an hour before bed. Soft light is best as this gives the right signals to the brain and promotes the release of the much needed melatonin. When the sleep is light or broken or if you wake early (3-4am) this is a clue that melatonin may be helpful. It is not as helpful for those

who cannot get off to sleep. This is another issue and may require a visit with your doctor. Melatonin is available over the counter in other countries especially at airports but in New Zealand it is available only on prescription. The dosing range can be anywhere from 1-12 mg per night depending on the individual. We like to use melatonin as a short term solution while we help promote production of melatonin in the body. For people with long term insomnia (>5 years) may need longer on melatonin to promote a normal sleep rhythm. Making sure you have the nutrients needed to promote sleep is important too. Many of you have noticed a profound improvement in the quality of your sleep with high-dose magnesium. Melatonin can be used safely alongside antidepressant medication to help with the sleep disturbance that some people experience with this medication. If this applies to you, please discuss this with your doctor. **Magnesium** is a mineral that has a calming effect on the nervous system and many of you have found

it useful for helping to get off to sleep as well as improving the quality of the sleep. Magnesium can be particularly helpful if there is also signs, of irritability, headaches, muscle aches and/or cramps and mild anxiety. An important part of this equation is of course **Vitamin D** as we have mentioned more than a few times before. Sunlight on the skin is necessary for the precursor of vitamin D and the active form is then made in the liver. Vitamin D is measured with a blood test and ideally vitamin D levels should be 100-120nmol/L. We often use prescription vitamin D as it is inexpensive and quickly brings vitamin D into healthy ranges. While you are getting sunlight on your eyes and skin you might as well be exercising! **Exercise** is well known to help prepare you for sleep. A walk before dinner or 20 minutes playing basketball with the children or a swim at the local pool. Whatever you can fit into your lifestyle is going to be great as long it is regular.

Our favourite quote

"Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk"
Henry David Thoreau 1817-1862

Health tips

Aqueous creams are often recommended for eczema and other dry irritated skin conditions. These creams have a paraffin base to them. Paraffins are a group of chemicals that are traditionally derived from petroleum, but can also be synthetically produced. Some people (especially children) find these creams can further dry and irritate the skin. If this is the case please get a 100% natural cream without parabens, colours and synthetic preservatives/fragrances. We use Aquaderm which is effective, inexpensive and available over the counter.

Happy Patient File

A patient popped in last week to pick up some magnesium and told us this story: Her 8 year old son with epilepsy started taking epilepsy medication and practitioner-only magnesium at the same time and there were no seizures for 1 month. After 3 weeks off the magnesium her son had 3 seizures (and possibly more during the night) He has been back on the magnesium with the medication with no seizures for 4 months. Mum is very happy with this outcome

More information

We had the privilege of having Loula George speak at our peer review meeting last week. Loula George is a Naturopath and has been a fertility expert for the last 11 years. We were all very impressed at the depth of her knowledge in everything women and men can do to prepare themselves for a healthy baby. In particular there is a vast range of knowledge she has about how the immune system can affect ferti-

lity. She will soon be part of a new clinic called Motherwell in Mt Eden where she will be working with a Paediatrician and a whole host of other health professionals that specialise in pre-conception care, fertility and healthy babies. Her phone number is 630 0067.

Something to be aware of. The husband of a patient was recently found to have high lead levels in his blood by the hospi-

tal. High blood lead levels are only found in recent or ongoing exposure. Because they were on tank water, this couple had their water tested and it was high in lead. Our patient was in the middle of a heavy metal detox with us so her blood lead levels were normal. The reason we highlight this is because if you commonly drink tank water it would be wise to ensure there is no lead

used in the flashings.

Article five and six from the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Article V

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article VI

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.