Insomnia

- Difficulty falling asleep
  - More than 15 minutes to fall asleep

- Difficulty staying asleep
  - Waking often and trouble returning to sleep

- Sleep problems lasting more than 3 months
Insomnia: a Common Complaint

• One of the most common reasons for seeing a primary care provider
• Negative impact on health
  – Loss of energy
  – Loss of regeneration and repair time
  – Daytime drossiness and irritability

Stress Related disorder

• Daytime stress contributes to nighttime sleep problems

• Sleep problems at night contributes to daytime anxiety and depression
The stress response

• Produces the “fight or flight response” – provides the energy & strength to fight or run away from the danger.

• Release of adrenaline into the bloodstream, along with other stress hormones including norepinephrine & cortisol.

Symptoms of excess stress

• Physical – fatigue, headache, insomnia, muscle aches, heart palpitations, chest pain, abdominal cramps, nausea, trembling, cold extremities, flushing/sweating, frequent infections

• Mental – decreased memory & concentration, indecision, mental fogginess, loss of sense of humor
Symptoms of excess stress

• **Emotional** – anxiety, nervousness, depression, anger, frustration, worry, fear, irritability, impatience

• **Behavioral** – pacing, fidgeting, nervous habits, increased eating, smoking or drinking, crying, yelling, blaming, throwing things

Sleep Apnea

• Sleep apnea can cause major health problems
• Common sign is excessive daytime sleepiness
• Common in overweight individuals but not exclusively
• Loud snoring often present
• See your PCP for referral to a sleep clinic
Sleep Hygiene

- Good sleep is a learned behavior
- Go to sleep and awaken the same time every day
- Avoid stimulating activities before bed
- Avoid dietary stimulants
- Keep room completely dark
- Bedroom is a place of rest and relaxation

Female Hormones and sleep

- Estrogen is stimulating, progesterone calming
- Estrogen dominance common with PMS and perimenopause
- Warm flushes and night sweats can interrupt sleep
- Spicy foods and alcohol make hot flashes worse
Natural support for hormones

• Adrenal support
  – Vitamins C, B5, B6, licorice, rhodiola
• Phytoestrogens
  – Black cohosh, Dong quai, motherwort
• Bio-identical progesterone cream
• Consider bio-identical hormone replacement with your Naturopathic physician

Supplements to Promote Restful Sleep

• Melatonin
• 5 hydroxytryptophan, 5HTP
• Calcium and magnesium
Melatonin

• A hormone that influences the pineal gland and the sleep-wake cycle
• Helpful for jet lag
• Best used short term

5 HTP

• Tryptophan is an amino acid
• 5HTP is a serotonin precursor
• Serotonin and melatonin work together in the pineal gland
• Serotonin also support mood
• Found to be helpful with the sleep problems of Fibromyalgia
Calcium and Magnesium

• Relax the nervous system and the muscles
• Take your bone support supplement at bedtime
• Ca:Mg  2:1 or 1:1
• Increase magnesium if constipation is a problem

Herbal support

• Nervine herbs support the health of the nervous system
• Range in potency from mild to more drug like
• Adaptogens help the body deal with stress
Nervines

- Chamomile and catnip
- Skullcap, passion flower, motherwort
- Hops, oats
- Valerian
- St. John’s wort and Kava kava

Mild Nervines

- Chamomile and Catnip
- Gentle enough o use with children
- Commonly used as a tea
Moderate Nervines

- Hops and Oats are nourishing to the nervous system
- Hops may have a slight estrogenic effect, help for women but not for children
- Skullcap and passionflower have been studied for use with recovery from addiction

Stronger Nervines

- Valerian used alone can cause agitation in a small percentage of people
- St. John’s wort has had many studies showing support for mild to moderate depression
- Kava kava supportive for anxiety mixed with depression. Large amounts can be addictive
Adaptogens

- Rhodiola
- Eleutherococcus
- Licorice root
- Astragalus
- Shitake and Mitake

Rhodiola & Eleuthro

- Recent promising studies on support for dealing with stress and stress related effects
- Previously known as Siberian ginseng, Eleutherooccus has long been used to help the body deal with stress
Licorice Root

• Licorice one of the best herbs to support the adrenal glands
• Constituents similar to the hormones made by the adrenal gland
• Should not be used by those with high blood pressure
• DGL forms useful for GI tract do not support adrenal gland

Immune Support

• Stress can weaken immune system
• Frequent colds add stress to your life
• Shitake (Lentinus edodes)
• Astragalus
  – Used to support immune system
  – Switch to echinacea if you have a fever
Use Supplements Wisely

• Research and ask question
  – Pubmed; Books
• Ask your health care provider
• Don’t get fooled by hype or fads
• Just because it’s natural doesn’t mean it is right for you!
• Listen to your body

Exercise

• The ultimate stress buster
• Dissipates the excess energy from the stress response.
• Choose things you like, try classes
• Have an exercise buddy
• Walk
Flexibility

- Life is about change.
- Try new ways of dealing with problems.
- Change direction when it is in your best interest.
- Let others do things their way.
- Don’t should upon yourself.

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