



December 22nd, 2013

Good Sleep; Good Health

It's time to make New Year's Resolutions – this year make one to improve the quality of your sleep.

More and more research is demonstrating the importance of adequate sleep for overall health, however a blanket statement, such as "get 7 hours of sleep each night," is not proving reliable. Various factors can influence need, including genetics, age and current health status. A 20-year-old, whose brain is still developing, may need 8 hours, but a 60-year-old may only need 6 hours. Ensure you get enough that sleep so that you feel "dynamic" through the day, not dragging.

Develop good sleep habits!

Insufficient sleep contributes to poor health: a weakened immune system, weight gain, diabetes, heart disease and workplace/traffic accidents. Sleep medications rarely produce "quality sleep" and most people respond to developing a good sleep routine. Try to go to bed and get up at about the same time each day – including days off and holidays. Reduce caffeine and alcohol and avoid brain stimulants such as TV & computer for at least 30 minutes before bed.

Things that can help reverse the aging process!

Positive lifestyle choices – a healthy plant-based diet, regular exercise, sufficient sleep/stress management and a good social support system – may actually reverse the aging process! A study out of California has shown that these factors can increase telomeres, the DNA/protein complexes on the ends of chromosomes. When telomeres are damaged or shortened, cells die sooner, so protecting and preserving them may increase lifespan.

There is plenty you can do, without drugs or other medical interventions, to improve and enhance your quality of life, including getting better quality sleep. If you are ready to make some healthy New Year's Resolutions, talk to your pharmacist about the best choices for you.