

Get Enough Sleep

We *all* need an adequate daily dose



by Miles Hassell MD

This handout includes the most effective food and activity choices to improve sleep and is excerpted from pages 75–76 and 100 of *Good Food, Great Medicine* (4th edition), a Mediterranean diet and lifestyle guide and cookbook. The book is a practical, easy-to-read resource offering both the evidence and the tools to help prevent or reverse heart disease and type 2 diabetes, control high blood pressure, improve cholesterol levels, reduce risk of stroke, dementia, and cancer, and lose weight where appropriate. (You can find this handout along with others on lifestyle medicine topics like *Weight Loss and Diabetes Reversal* and *Cancer Prevention and Survivorship* on the resources tab at goodfoodgreatmedicine.com.)

Schedule more sleep and less screen time

Sleep is an essential nutrient our bodies can't store; we need a daily dose

- **Implement** as many as you can of the lifestyle suggestions for better sleep on the following pages.
- **Schedule** 7–9 hours of sleep daily.
- **Shut down** electronic media at least one hour before bedtime.
- **If you have exhausted** (no pun intended) **all of these suggestions and are still having difficulty sleeping** or if you are needing to take sleep medications on a regular basis, talk with your doctor about further assessment. (Untreated conditions like sleep apnea can cause other preventable medical complications.)

Sleep is an essential nutrient

A lot happens while we're sleeping that is critical to short-term performance as well as long-term health. Both our brains and our bodies need the cell repair and hormone regulation accomplished during sleep.

Increased risks associated with inadequate (less than 7 hours) sleep

There are very real health risks that result from not getting enough sleep. The role of sleep is too important to be drowned out by life's noise – make adequate sleep a priority!

- Higher death rates¹
- Heart disease and stroke²
- Insulin resistance and diabetes³
- Depression
- Obesity⁴
- Higher blood pressure⁵
- More coronary artery calcification⁶ (a measure of arterial damage)
- Decreased mental performance
- Higher levels of inflammation
- Susceptibility to infection⁷
- Impaired driving and cognitive skills

Can't find time for adequate sleep?

The goal is not just *more* sleep; the goal is *adequate* sleep, which is 7–9 hours. It's worth the effort – it may not come easily at first, but we can train our brain to adopt a new sleep-wake cycle, especially if we expose ourselves to more natural light during the day and less electric/electronic

¹ Parthasarathy, S. et al. *Am J Med* 2015;128:268-75

² Hoevenaer-Blom, M.P. et al. *Eur J Prev Cardiol* 2014;21:1367-75 (MORGEN study)

³ Liu, A. et al. *Metabolism* 2013;62:1553-6

⁴ Aziz, M. et al. *Metab Syndr Relat Disord* 2016;doi:10.1089

⁵ St-Onge, M.P. et al. *Circulation* 2016;134:e367-e86

⁶ Kim, C. W. et al. *Arterioscler Thromb Vasc Biol* 2015;35:2238-45

⁷ Prather, A. and Leung, C. *JAMA Int Med* 2016;176:850-1

light at night.¹ Staying up late in front of a screen can have a delaying effect on our sleep hormone (melatonin), causing it to kick in late and then hang around the next morning when we don't want it.²

Cut screen time: TV, tablet, computer, phone, and so on ...

- Eliminating or reducing screen time will not only free up time to sleep, it also helps reduce our risk of type 2 diabetes³ and contributes to significant weight loss.^{4,5}
- Watching television has even been shown to increase the risk of all-cause mortality!⁶
- Reading books (at least the paper kind) does not appear to have the adverse physical effects associated with television and computer time.⁷

Let's reduce our screen time!

Television and other kinds of screen-based entertainment are like candy – addictive, no nutritional value, and strongly associated with weight gain,⁸ more heart disease and stroke,⁹ type 2 diabetes, higher premature death rates, and probably depression. Sedentary behavior is associated with 22% more deaths of any cause, 15% more cardiovascular deaths, 14% more cardiovascular disease incidence, 13% more cancer related deaths *and* incidence, and a whopping 91% more type 2 diabetes incidence.¹⁰ When television-watching is added to time spent with electronic devices, it isn't surprising that sleep is so neglected. Just think! With some mindful media fasting we might eat less junk, spend more face time with our families, get more sleep, and have more energy and time to go outside and play!

¹ Wright, K.P. et al. *Curr Biol* 2013;23:1554-8

² Chang, A.M. et al. *PNAS* 2015;112:1232-7

³ Cassidy, S. et al. *BMJ Open* 2016;6:e010038

⁴ Otten, J.J. et al. *Arch Intern Med* 2009;169:2109-15

⁵ Tumin, R. & Anderson, S. *J Acad Nutr Diet* 2017;117:937-45

⁶ Sun, J.W. et al. *Am J Epidemiol* 2015;182:908-16 (Meta-analysis)

⁷ Gopinath, B. et al. *Arterioscler Thromb Vasc Biol* 2011;31:1233-9

⁸ Rosiek, A. et al. *Int J Environ Res Pub Health* 2015;12:9408-26 (Review)

⁹ Grontved, A. and Hu, F. *JAMA* 2011;305:2448-55

¹⁰ Biswas, A. et al. *Ann Intern Med* 2015;162:123-32

Watch out for “sleeping pills”

▪ Common prescription sleeping medications studied retrospectively – especially benzodiazepines such as *alprazolam*, *lorazepam*, and *clonazepam*, as well as multiple types of over-the-counter sleeping aids, are associated with higher death risk in many studies.^{11,12}

▪ After taking a sleeping pill, many people have significantly impaired skills in activities such as driving.¹³ The risk is likely greater for those over 65 years old.¹⁴

Investigate and pursue every lifestyle choice and bedtime strategy you can find to help you sleep as drug-free as possible. Putting the effort into finding a solution that doesn't require a prescription is worth it!

Do you have sleep apnea?

Sleep apnea and other sleep disorders can be treated to improve sleep. If you have chronic sleep problems, it may be worth talking to your doctor about whether you should be investigated for sleep apnea.

Prescription for a better sleep

Your doctor can suggest other behavioral techniques and medications that may help.

- **Develop a consistent routine** with regular sleep and wake times to allow 7–9 hours of sleep, including on weekends.
- **Avoid daytime naps** as a general rule – although an occasional nap can supplement an inadequate night's sleep.
- **Avoid afternoon or evening caffeine.**
- **Check all prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, and supplements:** they may be to blame for your insomnia.
- **Try to resolve problems** before bedtime. Lack of sleep will only intensify stress.
- **Keep the bedroom as cool as possible.**

¹¹ Lan, T.Y. et al. *PLoS ONE* 2015;10:e0145271

¹² Kripke, D. *Drug Saf* 2016;39:93-107

¹³ Kuehn, B.M. *JAMA* 2013;309:645-6

¹⁴ Fitzgerald, T. and Vietri, J. *Sleep Dis* 2015;doi:10.1155

- **Sip a hot mug of a caffeine-free herbal tea** with a teaspoon of honey. (Chamomile is a traditional soother.)
- **Restrict alcohol** (page 58) – it acts as both stimulant and depressant, with an unpredictable effect on sleep.
- **Get daily exercise**, preferably in the first half of the day. (Exercising close to bedtime can make sleeping more difficult.)
- **Do quiet activities** if you can't sleep, like reading or listening to relaxing music.
- **Remove television and other electronic devices** from the bedroom, and keep it as dark as possible – no night lights, and curtains closed. Even a digital clock display can disrupt sleep.
- **Avoid screen time** after dinner.
- **Take a deep hot bath** for 20–30 minutes in the late evening. (See page 84.) A few drops of lavender oil in the bath can help.
- **Focus on relaxing** your whole body, one muscle group at a time, from toes to head.
- **Avoid large meals within three hours of bedtime** – but a bedtime snack that combines protein, fat, and calcium may help. For example, an apple with cheese, or plain yogurt with honey and raw nuts.
- **Talk to your doctor** about treating symptoms that interfere with sleep, such as chronic pain or frequent urination.

If all else fails, read about the consequences of too little sleep in the box on page one – you might just scare yourself to sleep!

Supplements for better sleep

There are many supplements that occasionally help, and those we try most commonly are:

- Standardized valerian extract
- Mix of valerian, hops, and passion flower
- *Calms Forté*, a homeopathic preparation
- Melatonin, particularly if over 60 years old

Light therapy for better sleep and less seasonal affective disorder

- Dawn simulator alarm clocks use light instead of sound to trigger our wake-up cycle, gradually increasing the light in the room and allowing our bodies to wake up naturally. Dawn simulation has been found to help with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), and those who find it hard to wake up in the morning. (Also try suggestions on pages 23-24.)
- Exposure to bright light when you wake up can be effective sleep therapy. Depending on the time of year, this can be achieved with exposure to outside light first thing in the morning or by sitting in front of a 10,000 lux light for 20–30 minutes after waking up. Some people benefit from similar treatment in the late afternoon. (You can experiment for yourself or work with a sleep specialist.) This is the same kind of light used to treat SAD. There are various sources of these special lights, including usa.philips.com

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Dr. Hassell established the [Integrative Medicine Program](#) at Providence Cancer Center in Portland and he is a clinical instructor in the training of Internal Medicine residents, twice named *Outstanding Teacher of the Year*, and is Associate Medical Director and Professor at Pacific University School of Physician Assistant Studies. He also lectures widely to physician groups about the appropriate integration of lifestyle and conventional medicine. He is the co-author of *Good Food, Great Medicine*, an evidence-based guide to using a whole food Mediterranean diet in the pursuit of optimal health.

In his private practice Dr. Hassell encourages the vigorous use of evidence-based food and lifestyle choices and has been chosen as one of *Portland's Top Doctors*. Dr. Hassell is available for individual consultations for diagnosis, second opinion, or to develop patient-centered solutions using evidence-based conventional and lifestyle interventions.

Visit goodfoodgreatmedicine.com to:

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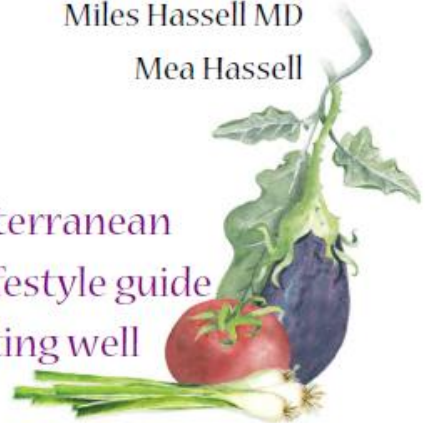
Good Food Great Medicine

Fourth Edition

Miles Hassell MD

Mea Hassell

a Mediterranean
diet and lifestyle guide
to eating well



The 300 easy-to-read pages present powerful medical evidence to support adopting a whole food Mediterranean diet-and-exercise based lifestyle, with over 200 simple-to-follow recipes using everyday ingredients. The 14-step *Risk Reduction Action Plan* helps:

- **prevent or reverse** heart disease and stroke
- **prevent or reverse** type 2 diabetes, prediabetes, metabolic syndrome, and gestational diabetes
- **improve** cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar with fewer (or no) medications
- **reduce** cancer risk and improve cancer survivorship
- **reduce** risk of dementia and Parkinson's disease
- **lose** weight and keep it off

This is a practical resource for anyone looking for an evidence-based approach to eating well without sacrificing eating enjoyment.

(Available at: [Amazon](#), [Powell's Books](#), [Providence Integrative Medicine Program](#), [County Libraries: Multnomah - Clackamas - Washington - Clark.](#))

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