"A NCCF Sisterhood Health Fact"

Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. ***3 John 1:2***

Sleep: Part II

Sleep is yet another of God's many miracles that he designed for us! What happens when we fall asleep? And, sisters, how do our hormone levels affect our ability to sleep?

The many benefits of sufficient sleep include; movement of short term memories to long term, promotes effective carbohydrate metabolism, and supports the stress and the appetite regulating hormones.

There are five phases of sleep: stages 1, 2, 3, 4 and REM (rapid eye movement). We usually begin at stage 1 and go through each stage until reaching REM sleep, and then the cycle repeats. Each complete sleep cycle takes from 90 to 110 minutes. The brain acts differently in each stage.

Stage I – is light sleep – you can easily be awakened – Have you ever awakened yourself with a sudden jerky movement because of a sensation of falling? This happens in Stage I because of certain brain stimulation.
Stage II – about 50 percent of our time sleeping is stage 2 sleep. During this stage, eye movement stops and your brain activity become slower.
Stage III - is the first stage of deep sleep. The brain waves are a combination of slow and faster waves. During this stage it is difficult to wake someone up, or it can be hard to wake up; you may feel groggy and disoriented for a few minutes.
Stage IV- is the second stage of deep sleep. In this stage the brain waves slow down. In this stage it is also very difficult to wake up. Both stages of deep sleep are important. If these stages are too short, sleep will not feel satisfying.
REM Sleep – Rapid Eye Movement-the dream stage of sleep that begins about 70 to 90 minutes after we fall asleep. Not fully understood, REM sleep is believed to be important in the creation of long term memories. If REM sleep is interrupted, the next sleep cycle goes directly to REM sleep instead of moving through the normal sleep cycles in order.

Hormonal changes affect sleep and lack of sleep affects hormone levels. Hormone (estrogen) levels spike and drop during the various stages and cycles of a woman's life. Sleep disturbance due to hot flashes usually occur during the first half of the night. Sleep is less interrupted during the REM (Rapid Eye Movement) stage of sleep. The good news is that hot flashes usually go away completely or are significantly decreased after about 1 year past menopause.

So what can you do? First, talk to your doctor to try to pinpoint the source of your sleep problems. One option may be to try hormonal support. Try relaxation techniques, certain exercises, wear layers and lowering room temperature may help.

References:
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http://longevity.about.com/od/sleep/a/sleep_stages.htmEdelman, J. (2012), Successful sleep strategies for women; Harvard medical school guide