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Simple Things Matter

Once again I'm in Australia, where it's mid-summer.

Unfortunately, when I arrived this time, I found that my little rainforest bungalow had been broken into. I lost all my appliances, the phone, fax, and my computer, which contained

my database of research on various natural plants and medicines that I've been compiling for the last eight or nine years. Fortunately, much of my database was backed up on a small laptop computer I carry with me now. I'm still trying to piece together the other information.

I also lost a lot of personal items, which would have no value except to me. On the bright side of things however, the thieves opted to drink only several "stubbies" of Australian beer I'd left in my fridge. For some reason they left the four bottles of nice Australian red wine that was given to me by a friend.

Until I get everything sorted out, I'm staying at a friend's house near town, where I can continue to work. It really doesn't take much for me to get by on, but I do miss some of the simple little things that were stolen. That fact was driven home a couple of nights ago.

Bleach at the Beach is a Peach

I was peeling some shrimp for dinner and part of the shell slid up underneath my fingernail. It hurt when it happened, but I really didn't think much about it at the time. About midnight, however, I woke up with a swollen, infected, throbbing thumb. My first thought was to drain the area with a needle and apply a few drops of

citricidal (the grapefruit seed extract I always carry) but I had left that at my bungalow.

Then I remembered a nifty remedy I learned several years ago while working as a hand on a commercial fishing boat. After three days of hauling in nets loaded with Spanish mackerel, I couldn't move my swollen hands the next morning. The bacteria and other "bugs" on salt-water fish will enter every little nick and cut, and quickly lead to an infection. One of the old timers on the boat told me to dip my hands in full-strength bleach to fix the problem. Reluctantly, I did, and within seconds I began to feel relief. Without any burning or discomfort, the bleach took care of the problem almost instantly.

I knew that a little bleach would take care of my current problem, too, but there was none to be found. I tried lemon juice, Tabasco, and cayenne pepper. Nothing worked. It was early the next morning before the stores opened and I could get any bleach. By that time, my thumb was back and blue. I drilled through the thumbnail with a red-hot sewing needle and soaked it in the bleach several times. While I'm sure I'll lose my nail, everything is finally back to normal.



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You will observe with concern how long a useful truth may be known and exist, before it is generally received and practiced on.

—Benjamin Franklin

There are several lessons to learn from this episode. First, don't forget to take the bleach on your next deep-sea fishing trip! Also, in emergencies, bleach can be used to disinfect drinking water, surgical tools, needles, and syringes (all of which could save your life if you frequent third-world countries, as I do). Obviously, you must exercise a degree of caution with bleach. It can be poisonous if taken internally undiluted, and the fumes and liquid can burn the eyes, mucus membranes, and lungs. Although it's very caustic and may not be the most "natural" remedy, it's very inexpensive, readily available (in most places of the world), and can be a lifesaver.

To Sleep, Perchance to Dream Aye, There's the Rub

Oftentimes, it's the simplest tools and habits we tend to either overlook or forget about when it comes to our maintaining our health. A good example is sleep.

One of the biggest changes that has taken place over the last couple of decades has been the trend to become a 24-hour society. You can now shop for your groceries and other goods down at the local WalMart at midnight. You can trade stocks, do your banking, chat with friends, and make vacation plans 24 hours a day over the Internet. It's possible to do business around the world, day or night, without ever leaving your home. It's being called the new revolution and the wave of the future.

Unfortunately, while it may seem simple enough to just reset the alarm clock and sleep whenever we want, we still live in very primitive bodies. Within the human body resides a biological clock that influences the activity of every single cell. Blood sugar, hormone levels, metabolic rates and body temperature, sodium/potassium levels, and immune function are just a few of the things directly linked to the body's internal clock. And currently there is very little attention being placed on the fact that altering your biological clock and/or ignoring your sleeping habits is a very serious threat to your health.

Neither the medical profession nor the general public seems to have an inkling of just how serious this problem has become. When the facts are finally in, *getting the proper amount of quality sleep and following a strict daily routine—with a set bedtime and wakeup time—*

will probably turn out to be just as important to your health as not smoking, limiting fats in your diet, and exercising.

Poor sleeping habits can have a direct influence on the quality and length of your life. Strangely, the direct link between something as basic as sleep and problems like heart disease, chronic fatigue syndrome, viral infections, ulcers, indigestion, muscular pain, strokes, asthma, headaches, and even fatal car crashes, is obviously being overlooked. Poor sleep habits are responsible for thousands of deaths a year either directly or indirectly. The most direct way is undoubtedly through automobile accidents.

Our own National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that over 100,000 automobile crashes each year are related to drowsy driving. Even more shocking are their latest figures showing that *traffic accidents caused by drowsy driving now kill more young people than alcohol-related accidents.*

I have little doubt that even greater numbers of people are dying indirectly from sleep disruption. This may seem a little hard to believe at first, but once you have a better understanding of what happens during a normal 24-hour cycle, it will make perfect sense. Better yet, it may help you solve any number of personal health problems you may have.

As you read through the events of the 24-hour cycle, see if you experience any symptoms that coincide with the various times I mention. By correlating your intake of certain vitamins, minerals, medications, etc. to these times, you might be able to achieve far better results in treating the problem that is causing your symptoms. I've also tried to make several notes and suggestions that should be of help.

Timing is Everything

I should begin by saying that our internal clocks don't operate on a precise 24-hour cycle. Research shows that the norm is 24.18 hours. You must experience daylight, darkness, waking and sleep cycles, and other routine patterns for your body to maintain this daily cycle.

Roughly 10 percent of the population has internal clocks that routinely run either over or under 24 hours. These are the individuals that are known as night-owls (those with circadian cycles or body clocks longer than 24 hours) or

early-birds (those with cycles shorter than 24 hours). True night-owls and true early-birds are rare however.

Our internal clocks regulate a surprising number of processes in our bodies. Here is a partial list based on what we now know:

Early Evening. Under normal circumstances, our core body temperature begins to drop gradually four or five hours before bedtime. Then, an hour or two before bedtime, it drops sharply. As it drops, increasing amounts of the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin are released from the pineal gland.

As the temperature begins to drop in the early evening hours, several other things also occur:

- 1) Your stomach begins to produce more acid, which can aggravate any ulcers you might have. If you have stomach ulcers, you may be able to counteract this increase in acid by taking a deglycerized licorice root product prior to the evening meal.
- 2) Your blood pressure begins to drop.
- 3) Your urinary output becomes highest around 6 p.m.
- 4) Your pain threshold reaches its lowest point about 9 p.m. If you notice arthritic, muscular, or other pain increasing in the late evening, it would be worth trying one of the natural pain-relieving creams or tablets (such as Joint Advantage) an hour or so before this time.

Late Evening. As the evening progresses and sleep sets in, the following events take place:

- 1) Sensitivity to allergens increases peaks around 11 p.m. This fact obviously suggests that asthmatics and other people with allergy problems should make sure they are using a quality air filtering device

throughout the night.

- 2) Levels of interleukin 1, one of your body's immune system regulators, increase during this period.
- 3) The risk of stroke from bursting blood vessels or hemorrhage is greatest. If you bruise or bleed easily beneath the skin, I would strongly suggest reading the article on vitamin K in the January 2001 issue of *ALTERNATIVES*, and also increasing your intake of vitamin C and bioflavonoids. With the exception of vitamin C, it doesn't matter when you take these vitamins because your body will take some time to build reserves. With vitamin C, however, taking a dose in the evening will probably help.
- 4) The immune cells called helper T lymphocytes peak in number around 1 a.m.
- 5) Also around 1 a.m., pregnant women are most likely to go into labor.
- 6) Levels of human growth hormone (HGH) reach their peak around 2 a.m. HGH has become a favorite topic among anti-aging groups. Despite its extraordinarily high price, many people are undergoing HGH injections. If you want to insure that your HGH levels are as high as naturally possible, make sure you don't eat any sweets or high carbohydrate foods before going to bed. Studies have shown that doing so will delay the release of HGH during the night or reduce its quantity.
- 7) The anti-inflammatory hormone cortisol from the adrenal glands reaches its lowest level during this time.
- 8) Pro-inflammatory and spasm-producing compounds called leukotrienes are also at their highest levels during the night. Because of this fact, the most common



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time for severe asthma attacks to occur is between 3 and 4 a.m.. On a practical note, you can eliminate many asthma problems by making sure the adrenal glands are nutritionally supported during this period.. The best way to do so is with glandular substances (such as Drenamin from Standard Process Laboratories), vitamin C, and a good B-complex vitamin just prior to bedtime and again during the night if you awaken to go to the bathroom. I would also suggest taking a tablespoon or two of cornstarch mixed with water during the night if you awaken. It is also important not to eat any sweets prior to bedtime, since this will only further weaken the adrenal glands.

Early Morning. As the sun begins to rise, daylight hits the retinas of the eyes. From the eyes, signals are sent to the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN), which contains the body's biological clock. The SCN then sends signals to the pineal gland to reduce the production of melatonin, which allows the body to awaken. This process triggers other events:

- 1) The body temperature begins to increase, except in night-owls that warm up an hour or two later. (Also, since night-owls' clocks are longer, there's a tendency for them to lie in bed a little longer each morning.)
- 2) Insulin levels are at their lowest, and levels of the adrenal hormone cortisol begin to increase.
- 3) Heart rate and blood pressure begin to rise quickly. Not surprisingly, angina problems, heart attacks, and sudden cardiac death also occur most commonly during this time. Because of this fact, taking vitamin E with the evening meal and also upon rising is a good idea. (Other heart formulas, such as Heart Advantage, with contain CoEnzyme Q10 could also be taken at this time.) Since vitamin E is absorbed better with a meal that contains some fat, it would be idea to take the vitamin E with the fresh-ground flaxseed or flax oil as I've recommended in the past. Following this regime could help prevent many early morning heart attacks and strokes. The risk of heart attack is greatest around 8

a.m., just about the time most people in this country are finishing their coffee and sweet roll.

- 4) The onset of menstruation is most likely around 6 a.m.
- 5) Hayfever symptoms are at their worst around 7 a.m.
- 6) Rheumatoid arthritis symptoms are often their worst in the early morning.
- 7) The helper T lymphocytes of the immune system are fewest during this time.

Midday. By noon, several other events are starting to take place:

- 1) Natural killer cell activity increases.
- 2) Blood hemoglobin levels peak.
- 3) Migraine headaches are most common.
- 4) The risk of stroke due to clot formation and blood vessel blockage is at its highest. Over the years, I have discussed numerous foods and vitamins that naturally decrease the coagulating tendency, or "stickiness," of blood platelets. By including these in your diet, especially during the noon meal, you can help lessen your risk of both stroke and heart attack. In France, a glass of red wine is routinely consumed with lunch, which undoubtedly helps lower the risk of such problems. Our lunch in the U.S. is often some form of fried fast food, which only contributes to blood clotting and the vessel blockage associated with stroke.

Afternoon. Around mid-afternoon, body temperatures begin to cool down again. The early-birds will begin to feel drowsy as the afternoon progresses, but the night-owls won't start to slow down until later in the evening.

- 1) Around 3 p.m., breathing becomes easiest. Airway openings are at their peak.
- 2) Your reflexes are at their highest level.
- 3) Your strength is also at a peak.
- 4) Around 4 p.m. your body temperature peaks.

Because these periodic daily events have such a profound effect on our lives, altering your sleep habits can sometimes be helpful. I've written a special report, titled *Curing Insomnia Through Sleep Stage Manipulation*, that details

ways to adjust your sleep patterns. (The report is available for \$4 by calling 800-718-8293, ext. 0H6908.)

You Can Even Damage Your Health While You Sleep

Obviously, not all of our problems arise from intentionally altering our sleep patterns and daily routines. Insomnia has become one of the most common problems of our time. The insomnia problem in the U.S. stems from several factors in addition to the push to become a “24-hour society” that I mentioned earlier. Two of the most common factors are snoring and sleep apnea.

If you or someone in your household consistently snores, keep in mind that this problem can be just as much of a health threat as smoking or a poor diet. A high percentage of Americans have this problem—estimates of snorers run as high as nearly 90 million men and women, roughly half of them on a consistent basis. Perhaps 10 to 15 percent of these individuals may even suffer from sleep apnea, where they completely stop breathing for short periods of time during their sleep. The problem becomes even more prevalent as we get older. Estimates are that 85 percent of those over the age of 40 snore.

Unfortunately, most people don’t realize that snoring affects both their quality of life and their overall health. One of the most common health complaints today is that of constant fatigue, which is often a direct result of snoring, sleep apnea, and poor sleep patterns. In fact, the problem with drowsy drivers that I mentioned earlier is directly related to snoring.

A study in Denmark found that 22 percent of snorers experienced memory problems and 57 percent had difficulty with concentration. (*Eur Neurol* 94;34(4):204-8) Other studies have found that individuals with the worst snoring problems also scored the worst on IQ and memory tests, and had poorer recall, coordination, and reaction times.

Rarely do snorers ever relate these problems to snoring. They usually believe that they sleep fine, and frequently know that they snore only because someone has complained to them about it. They have experienced fatigue and the other problems I’ve described for so long that they simply think they’re normal.

However, snoring interrupts and disturbs normal sleep patterns. Numerous studies have shown that it even impairs your ability to learn repetitive tasks such as golf or tennis techniques or more complex feats like piano playing. The reason is that your learning is actually reinforced by mental activity during periods of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep (REM describes a deep-sleep portion of your nightly sleep pattern when your eyes look about rapidly beneath your closed eyelids). Snoring and sleep apnea disrupts this stage of sleep. Snorers simply don’t get enough deep sleep.

Chronic snoring has also been related to increased blood pressure problems and possibly even heart attack and strokes. The risk increases even more with sleep apnea problems. I have little doubt that the combination of severe snoring or sleep apnea and heart medication results in thousands of instances where someone “dies peacefully in their sleep.”

Snoring occurs when the soft tissue in the throat collapses and the tongue relaxes. The incoming or exiting air then causes the tissues to vibrate. It happens at night because the muscles holding the tongue and soft tissue relax. Alcohol and drugs also relax the muscles in the throat area and increase the tendency to snore. Ironically, sleeping pills and tranquilizers are often prescribed to help someone get a restful night of sleep, but often complicate matters by increasing muscle relaxation and snoring.

Fat deposits in the throat, enlarged tonsils or adenoids, a receding chin, a malformed jaw structure, and bad dentures can all cause snoring. But the most common cause of snoring is probably obesity.

The problem of snoring becomes more prevalent as we get older. But, as with many problems I’ve covered in the past, more children now seem to be experiencing the problem. I’m sure that obesity is one contributing factor. Another would be the widespread use of medications like Ritalin, used to treat Attention Deficit Disorder. Altering sleep patterns and contributing to daytime fatigue in our school children certainly affects school performance and behavior.

Put a Sock In It

Correcting a snoring problem can be as simple as learning to sleep on your side with your

mouth shut or it can be as complex as surgery—or somewhere in between. If you have a snoring problem, you might first want to try the following suggestions. If you're still not successful, I suggest discussing the problem with your doctor or contacting a sleep disorder center. Most major cities have sleep disorder centers now and you can get a list of those in your area from the American Sleep Disorders Association, 1610 Fourteenth Street NW, Rochester, MN 55901. They also have a website at www.asda.org.

Many other things can affect snoring. If this is a problem you have, here are a few suggestions:

- 1) Avoid the use of alcohol and tobacco products. Alcohol relaxes the muscles of the throat, which block the airways during sleep. Tobacco use inflames and irritates the entire lining of your airways, from the mouth and nose to the lungs. This inflammation narrows the air passages, which leads to snoring problems.
- 2) Check your medications. Muscle relaxants, tranquilizers, sleeping pills, and many heart medications cause snoring. As I mentioned earlier, these medications could lead to someone with sleep apnea "peacefully dying in their sleep".
- 3) If you're overweight, losing a few pounds could be all you need to do to stop the snoring. It might not be easy, but it will be well worth the new-found energy you get each day from a good night's sleep.
- 4) Check your thyroid using the basal temperature method I've outlined in past issues. (This test is printed in the April 2000 issue of *ALTERNATIVES*. You can also find it in the Health Library at drdavidwilliams.com.) An underactive thyroid has been associated with sleep apnea.
- 5) Sleeping on your side with your mouth shut will help prevent snoring. To help keep your mouth shut you can try one of two techniques. Either gently place your fist under your chin as you sleep or prop a second pillow under your chin. Breathing through your nose while sleeping will not only help stop snoring, but will also help prevent sore throats and infections.
- 6) Sleeping on your back makes snoring worse as your tongue and throat tissues shift toward the throat and further narrow your airways. If you need help sleeping on your side, you can always use the trick of putting a tennis ball or two in a sock and sewing it to the back of your nightshirt. The best homemade device of this type that I've seen was made by a snorer's wife, who had been repeatedly accused of nagging her husband about his snoring. She presented her husband with a new pajama top that had a stuffed monkey sewed to its back.
- 7) In less severe cases of snoring, some people have been successful using Breathe Right nasal strips. You've probably seen these being used by many professional football players during the last few years. One of these strips consists of an adhesive strip attached to a flexible piece of plastic that helps flare the nostrils when attached. It was originally developed by a gentleman to improve his own breathing, which was impaired due to a deviated septum. A somewhat similar device that can also often be found in pharmacies is called Breathe-With-EEZ. It consists of small stainless steel coils that are inserted into the nostrils before going to bed.
- 8) If the throat is chronically irritated, then a humidifier or air purifier might be needed. Temporary throat and/or nasal congestion and irritation can be quickly relieved by gargling with warm salt water, using saline nasal sprays, or taking herbal throat lozenges like Herbal Immune Advantage. Whatever you do, don't use any of the corticosteroid or decongestant drops or sprays now being sold by prescription or over-the-counter. These can permanently damage nasal tissue and make problems worse.

More serious snoring problems and especially sleep apnea will need medical attention. Excess throat tissue, nasal obstructions, and chronically enlarged tonsils or adenoids may need to be removed surgically. A deviated septum may need repaired. Medications may have to be changed or eliminated.

One of the most effective treatments for sleep apnea and severe snoring is called Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP). It basically consists of a small air pump attached to a mask

that fits over the nose and mouth. It provides a steady flow of air into the throat throughout the night. *It is practically 100 percent effective at stopping snoring and probably the best current treatment for sleep apnea.* It will require a prescription from your doctor, but most insurance companies and Medicare will cover the cost.

Many people find CPAP somewhat annoying and difficult to get used to, but keep in mind that it will stop your snoring. This can, in turn, improve your energy levels, memory, and concentration; lower high blood pressure; create less burden on your heart; possibly eliminate the need for some medication; and even save your marriage.

Whatever method you use, the first order of business should be to establish proper sleep patterns and routines. Doing so will give you the rest you need and enable your body to keep its 24-hour internal clock set correctly. As more research becomes available, it should be possible for us to adjust our diet and supplement intake to coincide with the events that take place throughout the 24-hour cycle. As always, I'll keep you informed of any new research that comes available in this area.

Future Medicine: Doing the Right Thing at the Right Time

Unfortunately, although the research into this subject is growing, there seems to be very little interest in applying these findings to our everyday life. The main emphasis still seems to be only on *how* to treat problems without any regard to *when* to treat.

The practical implications of timing surgery, chemotherapy, hormone therapy, nutritional intake, medications and other treatments to take advantage of the precise events occurring during our 24-hour cycles are enormous. Unfortunately, physicians are not being trained in "chronobiology," and until they are, millions of people will continue to suffer needlessly or even die prematurely.

Nearly ten years ago, I wrote about a study showing that women who schedule their breast cancer surgery to coincide with specific days of their menstrual cycle significantly increased their chance of surviving the disease (*ALTERNATIVES*, August 1991). Women who had surgery on days 3 to 12 had a 54 percent chance of surviving for another 10

years. Women who had their surgery at any time other than these days had an 84 percent chance of 10-year survival. Starting with day one, when menstrual flow starts, the worst time to undergo surgery would be from day 3 to day 20.

When a woman's chance of survival can be increased from 54 percent to 84 percent simply by performing the surgery on the right day, you would think that surgery would be scheduled on only the safest days. That's not the case. Even after ten years, women are still not being told about this research. Surgeons still schedule their surgical procedures according to convenience and not based on what might be best for the patient. That kind of activity should be criminal. We'll look back on this practice in years to come and wonder how we could have let it happen. Unfortunately, other, similar research is also being ignored.

In two groups of ovarian cancer patients, it was found that simply by varying their schedules of treatment, the number of serious side effects such as nerve and kidney damage, bleeding, and hair loss could be cut in half (*Science* 85;228(4595):73-5).

For colorectal cancer patients, adjusting the timing of their chemotherapy improved the response rate by threefold and increased the median survival time by 50 percent (*Cancer* 85;(12):2534-40).

In another colorectal cancer study, it was found that when the chemotherapy drugs were given at the right time, doses could be increased since there was far less toxicity. This action resulted in an increased response rate of 66 percent and increased the 3-year survival rate of the patients by over 20 percent (*J. Pharm Pharmacol* 99:51(8):891-8).

Animal studies have found that the toxicity of over 30 anticancer drugs varies by more than 50 percent, depending on when they're administered. More importantly, drugs given at the least toxic times demonstrated the most potent antitumor effects. *Another study found that the tolerability and outcome of cancer treatment could be accurately predicted based on whether or not the treatment was coordinated with the body's circadian rhythm.* (*Novartis Found Symp* 00;227:119-36:discussion 136-42)

The use of psychotropic drugs is another

frightening area where little regard is given to the time of administration. Studies have shown that the effects of drugs like antipsychotics, antidepressant, mood stabilizers, and psychostimulants vary greatly depending on when they are administered. (*Psychosom Med* 99:61(5):618-29)

Millions of doses of these drugs are routinely being passed out daily in nursing homes and psychiatric wards throughout the country, without any regard for timing. Moreover, prescriptions for these same medications are also becoming more and more common throughout the general population. I feel certain that research will eventually tell us a very uncomfortable fact: The same drug that helps one person function normally in society can cause another person to commit some horrible criminal act.

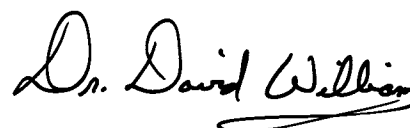
Some physicians are beginning to utilize some of this information, especially in the field of cancer treatment. Most, however, have little or no knowledge of the importance of establishing proper sleep cycles or timing treatment to take advantage of the body's biological clock. In one recent study, most doctors couldn't even correctly identify the time of day when common medical events are most likely to occur. (*Chronobiol Int* 98:15(4):377-94)

We'll Learn About Time...In Time

The fields of chronobiology and chronotherapy are relatively new. There's not much guidance out there at the moment. Hopefully that will change. The interactions in the body between various hormones, chemicals, medications, and processes are complicated to say the least. Sorting these things out will require a great deal of research. Like most things, however, we'll eventually discover that the ultimate solution will be to return to the basic routines, diets, and habits that our bodies were designed for.

Regardless of what we might like to believe, we are a daytime species. We are meant to sleep soundly in the dark and follow a fairly consistent routine of going to bed at a certain time and getting up at a fixed time. It's not rocket science. It's common sense. These days, common sense often gets overshadowed by our drive to become more technologically advanced.

Keep in mind, however, that technology doesn't necessarily change our biological makeup. We are still living in a somewhat primitive, yet complex, body that lives, breathes, and dies on a 24-hour internal clock. We may be smart enough to manipulate it, reset it, and fool it, but in the long run we do so at our own peril.



We Hope to Hear From You!

Dr. Williams greatly appreciates hearing from you, and gears his research to the concerns you express to him in your letters. Of course, practical and ethical constraints prevent him from answering personal medical questions by mail or email, but he'll answer as many as he can in the Mailbox section of *Alternatives*. For our part, we'll do our best to direct you to his issues, reports, and products related to the subject of your interest.

Here's how you can reach us:

- To send in Mailbox questions or Health Hints, write to P.O. Box 829, Ingram, TX 78025 or mailbox@drdavidwilliams.com
- For Customer Service matters such as address changes, call 800-527-3044 or write to custsvc@drdavidwilliams.com
- To get important information between issues, sign up for email dispatches at www.drdavidwilliams.com
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