Sleep as an Immunity Booster

Institute for Health and Healing Health Tip

Right now, one of the best things you can do to sustain or enhance your immunity in the face of the COVID-19 healthcare emergency is to get a good night's sleep. This can be a huge challenge as our routines, our work and home lives, are disrupted, and we are navigating an extra burden of stress. But adequate sleep can help you manage the chaos, and stay well in the process.

When you sleep, your body rests, resets and repairs. The nervous system is cleaning up and rebooting; and many chemicals, inflammatory markers and various important hormones for managing stress are re-balancing.

In Ayurvedic medicine, practitioners tell patients to go to bed around 10 pm and wake up, ideally, by 6 am. That gives you a good eight hours of sleep, which we consider adequate. Some of you might insist you are night owls who find it hard to get everything done during the daytime. It is easy to be lured by the sense of quiet and clarity that seem to take over in the wee hours, but you're depriving your body of a repair time and it will affect your immunity and your mood.

Try to use the sunset as a cue to start winding down. Begin a night time routine that is easy to follow consistently. Brush your teeth, maybe take a hot bath, listen to some soothing music, maybe drink an herbal tea. Turn off all screens by 8:30 pm, get in bed by 10 pm, and, hopefully, be asleep by 10:30 pm.

For night owls, try to move toward a more reasonable bedtime 15 minutes at a time. Ignore the urge to use a "second wind." Even if you feel like you have more energy, it is not the case. Working through a second wind can make you more at risk for getting sick.

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