



Quality, restorative sleep is as important as nutrient-rich foods or active movement. In the 1960's, the average American reported getting eight to nine hours of sleep every night. **That average has dropped to only 6.8 hours.**

The master endocrine gland, the pituitary, is extremely sensitive to sleep loss. This tiny hormone-secreting gland is positioned in the center of the brain. Light-sensitive, it serves as the biological clock, regulating sleep and wakefulness with hormones like cortisol and melatonin. Because the rising and setting of the sun influences the pituitary gland, spend time outside in the morning if possible.

Start with just one small change! Here are some easy ways to “Start Somewhere” getting more restorative sleep:

- Limit caffeine and drink only until noon, at the latest.
- Exercise during the daylight hours -- not at bedtime.
- Give yourself a break from technology at least two hours prior to the time you would like to fall asleep. This includes anything with an on/off button like electronic books, smartphones, television, and computers.
- Create a restful, relaxing bedroom environment.
- Keep your bedroom “pitch black.” Place digital clocks out of view.
- Avoid taking work or difficult discussions into your bedroom. Reserve this space for only sleep and lovemaking.
- Avoid alcohol at least four hours before bedtime.
- Establish an evening wind-down routine with journaling, prayer, or reading a real book. Be intentional about getting the day's worries “off loaded.”
- Practice relaxation breathing. Breathe in slowly and deeply for about four seconds and then breathe out for about eight seconds.
- Savor a hot shower or an Epsom salts bath. Sprinkle in some Lavender essential oil!
- Keep your bedroom on the cool side.
- Go to bed and wake up at consistent times.
- Rule out sleep disorders such as Obstructive Sleep Apnea.