



healthfocus clinical psychology

NEWSLETTER
WINTER 2019

Big Winter greetings to everyone!

Winter is a season for staying cosy indoors, enjoying a bowl of heart-warming soup, a warm fire or heater, while appreciating the beauty and power of nature during the rainy season, especially how the earth and our farmers' fields are nourished by nature's gifts.

If you're feeling dreary, then the following saying comes to mind...

"If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"
--Percy Bysshe Shelley

We are happy to announce that Healthfocus has been accepted to deliver psychological counselling under EAP for another nationwide provider.

Along with the services that we offer under EAP via a number of state and national organisations, we also provide a very accessible EAP Early Intervention Programme for small to medium businesses, their employees and families. Please see our website for more details.

Our services include assisting and supporting individuals with work stress, conflict resolution, work trauma, adjustment and support for outside of work challenges, including gambling, dependence and relationship issues.

For the first time in 6 years, Medicare rebates were increased by \$2 on 1st July 2019. We have been working hard to keep our fee increases to a minimum and there is no increase in the gap payment for our clients even though we have "passed through" the increase from Medicare.

Healthfocus understands that busy individuals and families can find it difficult to attend appointments during the work or study day so we provide sessions early in the morning (8AM - Riverton on Monday, Tuesday and Friday) and on evenings (5-8PM - Armadale Tuesday and Wednesday, and Riverton Monday and Friday).

In this newsletter, Dr Zdenka Bartova has provided an interesting information piece on insomnia.

Stay warm and drive safely, especially in the wet and at night...

-- Cheers from Yong and the rest
of the Healthfocus team.

The waiting list at Riverton is shorter so clients attending Armadale have the option to attend sessions at Riverton with a reduced gap fee to offset time and travel costs

Insomnia – Dr Zdenka Bartova

Insomnia is a common presenting symptom we see in psychology practice. Research suggests that 13–33% of Australian adults struggle to fall asleep or stay asleep (Cunnington, Junge & Fernando, 2013). Sleep disturbance is often exhibited by sufferers of Major Depressive Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Generalised Anxiety Disorder and other clinical presentations. Short term consequences of insomnia include fatigue, hypersensitivity to noise and light, low motivation, irritability and difficulties with concentration. Long term, insomnia has been associated with poorer mental health and a range of physical health complaints including hypertension, obesity, diabetes, lower immune functioning and migraine (Morin & Jarrin, 2013).

There are a range of lifestyle changes, healthy patterns and daily routine strategies that can help improve sleep and provide support for good mental and physical health.



References

- Cunnington, D., Junge, M. F., & Fernando, A. T. (2013). Insomnia: Prevalence, consequences and effective treatment. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 199, S36–S40.
- Morrin, C. M., & Jarrin, D. C. (2013). Epidemiology of insomnia: Prevalence, course, risk factors, and public health burden. *Sleep Medicine Clinics*, 8, 281–297.



During the day...

Regular routine is recommended, so though we would like to stay up late on weekends and enjoy our sleep-ins, it is best to wake up and retire to bed at approximately the same time every day, including weekends and holidays.

Exposure to sunlight during the day is needed for our bodies to produce Vitamin D, important for healthy bones, teeth and muscles. Sunlight also helps to regulate our Circadian rhythm, is how our bodies differentiate between day and night.

Exercise has been shown to promote healthy sleep but it is recommended not to do strenuous exercise in the few hours before sleep.

Healthy eating can help promote better sleep. Caffeine is a stimulant and can prevent one from falling asleep, so it is best to avoid caffeinated drinks and food (including coffee, tea, chocolate and cola) 4–6 hours before bedtime. Similarly, heavy food consumed shortly before bedtime can interfere with sleep, just like alcohol. Although some people believe that alcohol helps them get to sleep, it can in fact block rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, a critical part of the 3 phase sleep cycle.

At night...

Bedtime routine: As the sun sets and it becomes dark, our bodies start to produce a hormone, melatonin, that regulates our wake-sleep cycle.

The bedtime routine should start long before we climb into bed. We need time towards the end of the day to “unwind”. It may be tempting to binge on streaming videos of favourite shows on the phone or tablet, but we know that blue light from these devices can suppress melatonin production and trick the brain into thinking it is daytime. So, screen time should be minimised in the few hours before bed time.

Temperature: We should also ensure not to overwarm our homes because higher temperature can interfere with sleep. As night falls, core body temperature drops which makes us feel sleepy. Some people suggest that having a hot bath before bedtime helps them fall asleep. Rather than the warm and cosy feeling of the bath itself, it is the marked drop in body temperature afterwards that brings sleepiness.

Clear mind: If you spend time in bed tossing and turning because of worry about upcoming events or thinking about tasks needing to be done in upcoming days, try write down your thoughts before trying to get to sleep.

Sleep environment: Ensure that the bedroom is dark, quiet and cool, and invest in a good quality mattress. After all, we spend approximately a third of our life sleeping in bed. A good-sized bed is recommended, especially if sharing a bed which can increase sleep disturbances. Sleeping with an active (or snoring) pet can negatively affect your quality of sleep.

Make sure that to use your bed only for sleep (and sex!) so that the body learns to associate being in bed with sleep. Once we start using bed to watch TV, eat, work on our laptops and check emails on our phones, the body can't learn the connection between bed and sleep.



When the sleep does not come...

It can take 15–20 minutes on average to fall asleep. If you have had a few bad nights, it might naturally make you worry about having another sleepless night, but try not to fixate on your sleep.

Ensure you have a relaxing bedtime routine that may include meditation to try and calm your thoughts. Remember that it is normal to wake up between sleep cycles before settling back to sleep.

However, if you find yourself awake at night and unable to go back to sleep for 20 or more minutes, the best thing to do is to get up. If you remain in bed, the bed-sleep association becomes disrupted so it is better to go to another room and sit and read a book or do something else relaxing for a while.

Keep the lights dim, don't use the phone, tablet or other screen, and don't do anything too interesting or stimulating. Once you start feeling drowsy again, return to bed.

Remember: plan for your sleep, but do not lose sleep over it.

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