**Stop Press! New Wonder Medicine!**

Dr Andrew Tresidder

Decreases incidence of type 2 diabetes. Reduces risk of cancer. Reduces cardiovascular mortality. Helps immunity. Recovery from infections is quicker. Reduces stress and anxiety. Improves mental health. Dose – once daily for life, year in, year out – (a sales company’s dream!) Benefits – lots – and, oh, by the way, you feel better too! Any harmful side-effects? None known

How much would this be worth? We’d certainly want it if it was cheap. We might want it, even if very expensive? And we’d want it on the NHS too. If it was illegal, might we try and obtain it? The bad news is – there’s no such pill! The great news is – these are the benefits of sleep – not just any sleep, but Quality Sleep!

What is Quality Sleep? It’s refreshing sleep, in tune with our biology and our bio-rhythms. What are its characteristics? Undisturbed by noise or light, ideally starting well before midnight (9-10pm, earlier for a child)

How do we achieve it? By planning good habits, that the body gets used to. Exercise during the day. Avoid eating late. Avoid stimulants (caffeine etc) later in the day. Avoid blue light before bedtime (sunset takes us from blue natural light to oranges and reds – this prepares the brain and body for sleep – harsh bright blue or white light wakes us up again). Use the settings on the screen for evening light. Avoid brain stimulation. Reflect on the day at the end of the day to get closure (avoid rumination). A bath is relaxing, maybe with nice smells. Switch off or remove devices from the bedroom. Read a book before switching off light. If reading in bed, consider a red light head-torch. And then the brain will produce melatonin. Physiologically, we produce most melatonin before midnight – so grandmother was right – the hours before midnight *do* count double!

Contraindications: Bright light wakes us up (even looking at a bright phone screen can sabotage Quality Sleep). Watch out for alcohol – many people sleep better without (glutamate surge apart, many of us have ‘busy nights’ and fitful sleep after alcohol)

So when do we start…. If not tonight, then when? And planning is worthwhile – small incremental benefits mean more refreshing deposits into the Bank of Energy – and the Bank of Health! Too good to be true? NO. Too simple and obvious to put into action? Possibly. Too easy to avoid personal responsibility? Well, I’ll leave that one for you to answer…

Good luck and Go Well!

Resources: Lights Out by TS Wiley