

Dianne Steel of Scrivener and Webb will be sharing her health care knowledge through a regular monthly column. Dianne is a 20 year Northern Rivers local with vast experience in health care and holds a Bachelors degree in Naturopathy. Welcome Dianne.

Insomnia, you're not alone

< *Dianne Steel*

Can't sleep, you are not alone, insomnia affects up to one third of the population.

People who have insomnia may have trouble falling asleep. They may wake up during the night and not be able to get back to sleep, or they may wake too early.

Insomnia is usually a symptom of an underlying condition.

Sometimes people can experience a short term disturbance to their normal sleeping pattern. This might be when they are anxious, depressed, worried or excited. These temporary disturbances usually fix themselves when the cause of the disturbance is resolved.

For others insomnia may last for months or years and can be caused by a variety of conditions, e.g. arthritis, breathing problems, heart conditions, hot flushes, blood sugar imbalances, some medications, indigestion and so on.

What can help?

It is important to create a set of consistent habits to promote a healthy sleep cycle; such as

- Do not stay in bed if you are not sleeping.
- Do not read or watch TV in bed.
- Set an alarm clock and get up at the same time each morning, no matter how badly you slept the night before. Try to go to bed at the same time each night.
- Exercise regularly, but not close to bedtime.
- Only go to bed when you are sleepy.
- Do not nap during the day (if it is not part of your normal routine)

Eat foods in the evening that are high in tryptophan, to promote sleep, such as bananas, figs, dates, turkey, tuna, milk and yoghurt.

Try a warm bath with lavender oil, instead of a shower.

Avoid taking stimulants such as sugar, nicotine, coffee, alcohol and other caffeine containing drinks after 3.00pm.

Avoid foods such as bacon, cheese, chocolate, eggplant, ham, spinach, tomatoes and wine close to bedtime as they contain tyramine which can increase brain stimulation.

B group vitamins are important for helping the body deal with stress and promoting restful sleep.

Minerals such as calcium and magnesium can improve the quality of sleep. A combination of herbs such as Valerian, Passionflower, Kava, Skullcap, Lemon balm & Hops can help restore normal sleep patterns.

This information is of a general nature; remember to always consult with your health care professional as some medications may interact with the herbs recommended above.



Registered Nurse Sue Wilson says not to take your feet for granted, your feet, are what you eat!

Look after your feet

Feet are important. We often take them for granted, but without them life would be very different!

How many of us wake in the morning and put them on the floor and then go?

Often we only give them a thought because they hurt. They feel cold, cramped, sweaty or hot, and then we listen and change their living conditions. Sometimes it is inconvenient and they must continue their journey unaided.

Very few of us realise that what we eat affects our feet.

Obviously if we eat too much and carry around too much weight we stress our feet, but just as what we eat affects our heart, kidneys and liver so it affects our feet.

Too many fats leads to cholesterol deposits in our blood vessels leading to blood flow restriction and as our feet are at the extremity of our bodies they can miss out.

Check your feet today. Do you have hair loss on your calves? Are your toenails discoloured? Are your feet a darker colour than the rest of your body? Are your feet cold to touch? Do they ache when you walk? Do they ache at night? Do cuts

and blisters take a long time to heal? Do your feet swell and take along time to go back to normal or may be they are swollen all the time?

Your feet might be showing silent signs of distress. The news isn't all bad. There is some things you can do. Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables to give your body the best chance to heal.

Wear comfortable supportive shoes that don't restrict your feet and cause blisters. Wash and dry your feet properly each day. Moisturise them with cream to keep the skin flexible.

Exercise your legs and feet to promote better circulation. If walking is difficult ask your GP for a referral to an Exercise Physiologist for a personalised home exercise program that you are able to manage.

On a Care Plan through your GP you should be able to access funding to help with the expenses of an Exercise Physiologist which should provide this service at little or no cost to yourself. Happy walking for many years to come.

Sue Wilson RN

Co-ordinator of Chronic Conditions
Dharah Gibinj AMS Casino

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