

## Sleep.

By L. Goddard, S.R.N.

SLEEP IS A NATURAL STATE of unconsciousness which should occur for about seven to eight out of each twenty-four hours in a healthy adult; the amount may vary, children requiring the most, which should never be less than nine hours.

New born and sick patients need all the sleep they possibly can have.

It is nature's way of restoring the waste of the body and mind and of renewing the store of intra-molecular oxygen, which is replenished before consciousness returns.

It may be said that the time we spend in sleep is a period of refuelling for the entire system, for without sleep the nerve cells exhaust themselves.

If the condition of sleeplessness continues for any length of time there is no power of recuperation left, and the nervous system fails.

Sleeplessness may occur from reflex disturbances, which may be from within the body or without, such as bodily diseases or emotional upsets.

It has a pernicious effect on the nutritional processes of the body and if continued for any length of time may have a fatal result.

Insomnia is both a symptom and a cause of insanity, which may be acute or chronic.

In the acute state pain, shock or pyrexia may be the cause, or it may be the preliminary to insanity.

Too much sleep is as unhealthy as too little sleep and its reason should be sought for from the doctor.

Unconsciousness is usually deepest about one hour after falling asleep, according to the surrounding conditions.

During sleep the muscles become relaxed, heat production lessened, the skin becomes flushed with blood as the cutaneous vascular areas become dilated, making it necessary to keep the body covered and thus preventing chills.

Blood pressure is reduced and heart and respiration lessened, the kidneys secrete less urine and the liver less bile.

The pupils are contracted during sleep, dilating widely when awakening, will power being the first faculty to go and the last to appear on awakening.

Association of ideas and power of reasoning next, hearing is lost slowly, and touch is the least affected of the senses as only a slight touch to the skin will awaken the sleeper from a natural sleep.

Memory and imagination are the last of the senses to go before unconsciousness is complete.

CAUSE.—Various theories have been advanced, one being that the brain receives a much smaller blood supply during sleep, as there is slight anæmia of the brain, as may be noticed in cases of syncope, when sudden anæmia of the brain causes temporary loss of consciousness.

TREATMENT.—Sleeplessness may be due to an unsuitable mattress, it may be too soft or too hard, it should be firm and suitable for all the year round use, the bed clothes being just warm enough and as light as possible for the degree of warmth required.

Ventilation is also an important matter in the bedroom.

For chronic cases of sleeplessness, sleep should be courted without the use of drugs if possible, the head raised with extra pillows may help, or hot drinks given, heat to the extremities, or a warm bath may help to induce sleep, even sponging of the face and hands sometimes assists.

Another method is to make sure the bed is quite comfortable, the patient lying in which ever position he likes best, and then thinking of his feet and letting those muscles completely relax, then the legs, buttocks, hands and arms, and finally to the neck and head till all is completely relaxed will often induce sleep again.

In acute cases of sleeplessness, drugs will be prescribed and sleep should be noted, whether it is continuous or broken.

Drugs should never be given for insomnia unless ordered by the doctor.

## Dreams.

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I would recall a vision which I dreamed  
Perchance in sleep; for in itself a thought,  
A slumbering thought, is capable of years,  
And curdles a long life into one hour.

BYRON.

DREAMS OCCUR MOSTLY IN LIGHT SLEEP, and is a form of partial insomnia, more often as the sleeper awakens, or as different parts of the brain and their faculties go to sleep, which they do in a certain order.

And as will and reason become dulled, memory and imagination become more vivid so that pictures are presented to the mind before deeper sleep takes place, as deeper sleep is dreamless.

The dream exhibits the unconscious life of a person deprived of any volitional control and may reveal past experiences in a disorderly and grotesque manner, having little relation to time, so that incidents that have occurred long ago may be distorted and revived, or if it should be a painful emotional occurrence a nightmare may result.

This is often due to dyspepsia occurring after a heavy meal, giving rise to dreams such as falling downstairs or from a great height, and is sufficient to cause a nightmare; this is just one of the many physical causes being the reason.

Persistent dreams will nearly always have a physical cause due to some dramatic incident in the past.

Attention should be given to discovering, if possible, any repressed memories responsible for the mental unrest, as they often become more evident during sleep, and if on awakening the dream is remembered so well that it can be recalled vividly, it may easily give a clue to the cause of the disturbing memory; visions of an actual place received in sleep, which the sleeper has never seen before, later on every detail proving correct.

Thus the dreamer dreamed, that walking through a leafy glade and on across a narrow old bridge, the lane continuing until it ended by two tall iron pillars, which was probably in years gone by the entrance to a once large estate, some several years later the sleeper actually visited that walk and could recall every detail of the bridge and the old pillars; this type of dream is not uncommon, it is a peculiar experience and may cause controversy as to whether in deep sleep the mind can ignore physical space or whether, which is more likely, having seen a picture of the scene quite casually, a sub-

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