



EXPERT NOTES

Lauren Noel

Naturopath



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A Naturopath Perspective

Dr. Lauren Noel

Licensed Naturopathic Doctor

Expert in Natural Medicine

Host of Dr. Lowe Radio (podcast)

www.DrLaurenNoel.com

www.DrLoweRadio.com

Expertise

Dr. Noel's areas of expertise are digestive disorders, thyroid and hormonal imbalances and using primal nutrition with patients.

In High School Dr. Noel was always sick. She had a thyroid problem, digestive issues and suffered in most of the areas she specializes in today. Noel encountered many doctors but never got the answers she desperately sought.

Years later Lauren saw a naturopathic doctor and finally found the "real answers" to "rebuild my body and live healthier than even before I got sick."

Her passion became food as medicine. Seeing the inadequate care that her own friends and family continued to receive, the now healed and recovered Lauren wanted to offer the superior treatment she'd received during her time of need.

Food As Medicine

Every time you eat a meal you can have medicine on your plate that can heal and rebuild your body, or your nutrition can do you harm.

Using nutrition Dr. Noel has helped patients to rebuild from “incurable” diseases. Rewarding job I love what I do.

I. How Do You View The Problem Of Sleep?

Health and Healing

Every system is affected by sleep. It's more than just feeling happy to be getting a full night of rest but PARAMOUNT to wellness. Getting adequate sleep is completely essential to a healthy functioning body, and foundational to building the body back to health.

When we miss a good night's sleep we usually want sugar, not a balanced meal. We'll become so severely insulin resistant for a day that our body composition nearly mirrors that of a type 2 diabetic. We also can't learn as well; hence you hear people say they just “feel out of it.” The brain needs to rest at night, or else it won't be able to take in new information the next day.

In summary, without adequate sleep the body/brain:

- Can't detox optimally
- Can't fight off infections as should be able
- Becomes insulin resistant
- Mirrors the chemical environment of a type II diabetic
- Functions necessary for learning are disabled (feel “out of it”)

- Thought processes diminish

Dose

There's no set formula or magic number for required hours of sleep. It's more of a "sweet spot," unique to the individual. Each of us can use our intuition; ie however much you need in order to feel refreshed. There are various factors concerning adrenal glands, neurotransmitters and more, but ultimately the amount of sleep a person needs is tailored to their body and lifestyle.

Cancer

The World Health Organization looks at shift working and not having enough sleep as a human carcinogen. Sleep protects the body from cancer. When we don't get enough we don't produce enough melatonin, a sleep hormone that research has shown to be anti-cancer. If too little melatonin is released over time, the risk of cancer increases.

Fertility

Fertility is affected by balance of hormones, which requires good sleep.

Weight loss

People who don't sleep enough tend to have trouble losing weight.

II. What Symptoms Should One Look For?

You might have “improper sleep” and not even know it. Even if you’re sleeping through the night it can be that you’re not sleeping deeply enough. Some people feel *somewhat* refreshed but feel:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Difficulty thinking
- Forgetfulness
- Brain fog
- Sleepy all day long

III. What Aggravates The Problem?

Stress: The #1 Reason for Sleep Problems

The Sympathetic Nervous System

The sympathetic division of the nervous system activates the fight or flight mode and it’s stimulated by stress.

The Parasympathetic Nervous System

The parasympathetic activates our “rest and digest mode.” It’s the relaxing, chilling out, digesting food mode, which may be stimulated by yoga, breathing, etc.

We should have an equal balance of the two but many of us are overstimulated in the sympathetic mode, which is sure bet for trouble with sleeping.

Essentially, “your body thinks you’re running from a tiger...”

So if stress is in your life, whether real or imagined, you’re going to have a hard time going to sleep.

Biochemical Causes

- Parasites*
- Magnesium deficiency
- Deficiency of the B vitamins and vitamin C, which help to support the adrenal glands
- Elevated cortisol (a steroid hormone)**
- Adrenal dysregulation

**Parasites tend to be awake at night, so when you're trying to sleep they're up "having a party" and keeping your stress hormones elevated so you can't get restful sleep.*

***You normally want cortisol high in the morning. Levels will naturally drop through the day, and should be low at night. When cortisol levels diminish, melatonin secretion is elevated. High cortisone levels at night produce the "night owl."*

Lifestyle factors

- artificial lights on at night*
- light from the glare on a computer screen, iphone, etc. after sundown*
- too many stimulants
- artificial sweeteners
- stress/up at night thinking

**Artificial lights trick the body to behave as if it's daytime and release daytime hormones.*

Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is an "obstructive" issue where openings in the nasal passages or the throat aren't open enough impeding the proper flow of air. It can be the result of allergies, or sometimes weight loss can help. It can also be "simply genetic."

If you have sleep apnea get diagnosed and treatment with a [CPAP](#).

Snoring is a related condition caused by constricted airways, which can be due to food sensitivities, dairy allergies, or just needing to sleep on your side.

IV. How Would You Treat The Problem?

Root Cause

Treatment always depends upon the person. Dr. Noel rarely just doles out treatments but is always looking for the root cause. If the reason is lifestyle or stimulants, for example, than these first need to be addressed.

But there are some general tips that can apply to most or all of us.

Tips for Improving Sleep

Daytime:

- cut out stimulants such as coffee, tea, sugar and soda pop
- work out; ideal workouts are:*
- Interval training
- Weight lifting

**Quality exercise stimulates proper release of hormones during the day so you can have proper release during the night.*

After sundown:

- Avoid exposure to lots of artificial light
- Dim the lights
- Use night lights and reading lamps so body doesn't think the sun is above its head

- Use [amber glasses](#) to block out blue rays

In general:

- Realign the body to the [circadian rhythm](#)
 - get lots of fresh sunshine every day
 - attune yourself to the cosmic light and dark cycles (rise with the sun/cool down with the moon)
- Address dysregulation of the adrenal gland/elevated cortisol, which can be reduced using natural treatments
- Try botanicals to increase GABA, a calming neurotransmitter that causes you to feel chilled out
- Use natural treatments to increase melatonin

V. Dietary Recommendations?

Foods

- Cut out stimulants and sugar
- Avoid processed food and grains
- Cut out dairy
- Foods with high magnesium content:
 - Pumpkin seeds
 - Almonds
- Turkey before bed*
- Rich in vitamin C which supports the adrenal glands:
 - Red bell peppers
 - Brussel sprouts
 - Broccoli
 - Strawberries
- Vitamin B5-rich:
 - Shiitake mushrooms
- Increase serotonin, a precursor to melatonin:

- Cashews
- Bananas
- Figs

Herbs

Experiment or create a blend of herbs to your taste and needs.

- valerian root
- kava kava (can be very strong)
- chamomile

Supplements

- **Magnesium**
 - Take just before bed
 - RECOMMENDED: magnesium powder supplement; try magnesium-citrate before bed to relax the brain, calm the body and prepare you for sleep
- **Vitamin B5**- sleep-supportive; often depleted by stress
- **GABA**- calming neurotransmitter that helps you get into the parasympathetic state
- **5HTP**- precursor to serotonin, which converts to melatonin.**

**Some people can fall asleep but not stay asleep. This is the result of a blood sugar imbalance. Overnight a blood sugar drop will cause the body to release stress hormones, such as adrenaline, waking the person up. Protein before bed can keep the blood sugar stable and keep you asleep during the night. Soy is not recommended, but any other protein is good.*

***In general Dr. Noel does not recommend supplementing melatonin hormone because it can be disruptive to overall hormonal balance. Instead, try other treatments first such as adjusting lifestyle, improving*

nutrient intake, trying herbs, etc. If still needed you might try 1-2mg to begin, or up to 20 mg.

VI. What Lifestyle Recommendations Would You Make?

Relax

- #1 cut down on the stress
- Take sunrise and sundown walks
- Deep breathing instantly puts you into parasympathetic mode and makes you instantly relaxed

Social Activity

- You need a social life that “charges your battery”
- Relationships: be around people who make you happy
- Like your job

“Sacred Sleep Space”

- Bedroom should be in complete and total darkness*

**The body is very sensitive to light. Even a sleep mask isn't enough because the skin has light receptors and responds to light.*

Avoid

- Avoid alcohol before bed*
- Smoking: the nicotine rush also keeps you awake
- Exercise close to bedtime; the body isn't made to do strenuous activity once the sun goes down

**Many ladies rely on wine to go to bed but alcohol causes the blood sugar to drop in the middle of night.*