

SLEEP: BOTH QUANTITY AND QUALITY MATTER

The Witness · 25 Mar 2024 · 9

In the hustle and bustle of modern life, sleep often takes a back seat, yet its significance cannot be overstated.

According to recent research, a staggering 62% of adults worldwide are not getting adequate sleep, leading to many health concerns beyond just feeling tired.

Pharmacist Anneke Meyer from Medipost Pharmacy, underscores the critical importance of sleep for overall wellbeing.

“Sleep is more than just rest; it’s a cornerstone of a healthy life.

“Adults typically need seven hours to eight hours of sleep each night to support healthy brain activity and ensure their overall wellbeing,” said Meyer.

Recognising the signs of inadequate sleep is crucial. If you’re experiencing changes in mood, daytime fatigue, difficulty concentrating, persistent tiredness or trouble falling or staying asleep, it may be time to reassess your sleep habits.

“Insufficient sleep can impair cognitive function and increase the risk of chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, dementia and diabetes,” said Meyer.

Understanding the signs of poor sleep quality is key.

Meyer identifies five indicators that could signal the need for better sleep habits.

- Changes in mood and motivation.
- Daytime fatigue and irritability.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Persistent tiredness despite ample time in bed.
- Trouble falling or staying asleep.

“If any of these resonate with you, it’s time to prioritise your sleep habits,” said Meyer.

She offers several practical tips for better sleep.

- Stick to a consistent sleep schedule.
- Create a sleep-friendly environment.
- Avoid heavy meals, caffeine, alcohol, and smoking before bed.
- Keep electronic devices out of the bedroom.
- Exercise regularly.

For those who still struggle, over-the-counter medications can offer temporary relief.

However, Meyer emphasises responsible use, cautioning against exceeding recommended dosages and highlighting potential side effects.

“Persistent sleep issues warrant professional attention, and anyone experiencing chronic insomnia or sleep disturbances should consult a healthcare provider promptly,” said Meyer.

“While medication may offer relief, the importance of careful management due to their addictive nature and potential side effects cannot be emphasised enough.

“Chronic medication management is particularly crucial for those with coexisting health conditions.

“We strongly encourage patients to discuss their medication with their healthcare providers and to double check how it would interact with some of the other medicines that they are already taking.

“We also invite patients to draw on the support and clinical advice of our qualified pharmacists, who can engage with patients in all official South African languages telephonically or online,” added Meyer.

— Medipost Pharmacy.