

Reading Passage (210 words): Are you getting a good night's sleep?

Sleep is a naturally recurring state characterized by reduced or absent consciousness, relatively suspended sensory activity, and inactivity of nearly all voluntary muscles. It is distinguished from quiet wakefulness by a decreased ability to react to stimuli, and is more easily reversible than being in hibernation or a coma. Sleep is a heightened anabolic state, accentuating the growth and rejuvenation of the immune, nervous, skeletal and muscular systems. It is observed in all mammals, all birds, and many reptiles, amphibians, and fish.

If you are having trouble sleeping, pick up something at the pharmacy in your neighborhood. You don't need to see a healthcare professional. After all, over-the-counter medicines (OCT's) are safer than prescription sleep aids. Sometimes having a little alcohol or wine with your sleep aid will help you to go to sleep faster. But make sure you drink the alcoholic beverage in very modest amounts. The last thing you should consider is that you should only use prescription sleep aids as a last resort. Many prescription sleep aids are not safe and are addictive or cause dependency. There are many cases in which patients were prescribed sleep aids and became addicted to them.

Writing Prompt: How does the information in the lecture disagree with the points made in the reading passage?

Lecture (395 words): Recommendations for Sleep Aids

Everyone wants to have a good night's sleep. If you are having trouble sleeping at night, you are likely to try just about anything. However, there are three specific points mentioned in the reading passage that represent very bad advice for those trying to find solutions to eliminate their insomnia.

First of all, it's important to discuss all of your health conditions with your healthcare professional, especially if you've been experiencing symptoms of insomnia for more than a month. Over-the-counter (OTC's) sleep aids may be appropriate, but it's smart to discuss any treatment options with your healthcare professional before you self-medicate. Common OTC medications used as sleep aids may contain ingredients such as antihistamines and/or pain relievers which you may not need and also have side effects. Work with your healthcare professional to develop a personalized treatment plan including lifestyle changes and sleep habits to address your insomnia or other sleep problems over the long term.

Second of all, sleep medications should not be used with alcohol or other drugs. Sleep aids should also not be taken before driving or operating machinery, or before taking a bath or shower, among other things. Always follow your healthcare professional's instructions about how to take, when to take, and how long to take sleep aids. Some people feel that alcohol is a sleep aid on its own. However, while alcohol may calm you and speed the onset of sleep, it actually increases the number of times you awaken during the night.

Finally, when taken as prescribed, sleep aids can safely and effectively treat insomnia. There is a lower risk for dependency and tolerance with the newer prescription sleep aids compared to traditional benzodiazepines. People with a history of addiction, or alcohol and drug abuse, are at an increased risk of dependence from sleep aids. Be sure to inform your healthcare professional of any previous dependence problems.

As with all medications, it is important to take sleep aids only as directed by a healthcare professional. This means following his or her instructions about how to take, when to take and how long to take sleep medicine. Sleep aids should not be taken with alcohol, before driving or operating machinery, or before taking a bath or shower, among other things. Be sure you're able to devote 7 to 8 hours to sleep before being active again.