

JUNE  
15, 2003

## Sleeping in the graveyard

In the 1600s, it was noticed that some folks were actually buried alive. In London, there was a marked increase in population and less room to bury the dead. Coffins were periodically dug up and the ground was reused. One in 25 coffins was found to have scratch marks on the inside. It then became custom to tie a string on the wrist of the alleged corpse and lead it out of the coffin to a small bell. Someone would be paid to sit in the graveyard and listen for an occasional bell. In our language today, we have such terms as dead ringer, saved by the bell and of course, graveyard shift.

It has been known for decades that folks who work the graveyard shift, i.e. 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. in general, have a poorer health physically and psychologically. There are some ways to remedy this. One should have a continuation of their sleep/awake cycle on a daily basis rather than on days off trying to live like everyone else, being awake during the day and sleeping at night. Therefore, the same time should be for sleep during days off. I would recommend that an hour or two after coming home from work, the employee would do at least six hours of uninterrupted sleep rather than taking naps at various times of the day.

Melatonin is a sleep hormone which is produced less than the brain third eye (the pineal gland) as we get older or in cer-

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tain stress-related situations. Taking 3 to 12 mg before retiring would ensure not only a more restful sleep, but provide the antioxidant-aging effect of this natural hormone.

In addition, first thing on arising, one should be exposed to bright light. The best is outdoor sunlight and at this time of the year, it's easy to get. Second best would be outdoors, even if the sun wasn't shining. The third is SAD light (Seasonal Affective Disorder full spectrum light of at least 10,000 lux). The SAD light can be obtained from such health food stores as The Health Alternative in Independence and costs \$200 to \$500, of which there are several variations. They are available as visors, dawn simulators and light box therapy.

Failure to obtain the proper sleep/wake cycle on a daily pattern has been shown in many studies, including that on pilots with jet lag, to cause irritability and depression, as well as an earlier death.