

Health & Beauty News

Sleep: The Original Full-Body Makeover

by Michael Breus, Ph.D.

(NAPSA)—If you want to look better, close your eyes.

Getting more sleep is one of the best ways to improve the appearance of your skin, eyes and hair. It also improves health and overall well-being. In fact, you can think of sleeping as a repair shop. Your body enters its maintenance phase—or its own private operating room—when you sleep, going to work on cellular damage, rebounding from external stressors such as UV rays and improving circulation.

Because millions of people cannot reach deep sleep on a regular basis, they lose out on visiting this “repair shop.” As a result, their skin, eyes and even hair may not look as good as they could.

Of course, the benefits of sleep aren’t only skin deep. There’s evidence indicating a good night’s sleep can help with weight loss and even slow a process known as arterial aging, which refers to a decline in heart and blood vessel functioning. So what’s the best way to find dreamland? Try these tips:

- **Monitor caffeine consumption.** Caffeine can stay in your body up to about 14 hours. So if you drink a cup of coffee at noon and are still awake at midnight, that might be the reason. If you have already had too much caffeine, try eating some carbohydrates such as bread or crackers to help reduce the effects.

- **Relax before bedtime.** Stress not only makes you miserable, it wreaks havoc on your sleep. Develop some kind of pre-sleep ritual to break the connection between all the day’s stress



Sleeping can be viewed as maintenance for the body.

and bedtime. These rituals can be as short as 10 minutes or as long as an hour.

- **Avoid long naps.** Napping can only make matters worse if you have problems sleeping at night. If you do nap, keep it short. A brief 15-20-minute snooze about eight hours after you get up in the morning can actually be rejuvenating.

- **Think about when you exercise.** If you are the type of person who gets energized or becomes more alert after exercise, it may be best not to exercise in the evening. Still, be sure to get your exercise in each day. A recent study found that even morning exercise can help relieve insomnia.

More information on the benefits of sleep can be found in “Good Night: The Sleep Doctor’s 4-Week Program to Better Sleep and Better Health” (Dutton, \$24.95).

Mr. Breus is a practicing Ph.D. in clinical psychology with a specialty in sleep disorders. He oversees nine sleep labs as the senior vice president of clinical operations of Areté Sleephealth.