

Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

Editor’s Note: Content presented in the Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog is for awareness and informational purposes only, and it is not meant to be a diagnostic tool.

Editor’s Note: You are invited to join Dr. Lisa Clifford from Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center and Dr. Steve Hutton from Epilepsy Alliance Ohio on August 24th from 7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. for a Zoom Live session as they discuss the “New Normal” for going back to school. This is a must see opportunity! Dr. Clifford and Dr. Hutton will try to help teachers, parents, and students make sense of the “New Normal”. During the Zoom session, Dr. Clifford will be discussing tips and strategies for teachers, parents, and students on how to adjust to either going back to in-person instruction or how to best manage virtual or distance learning. Here is the information for joining Dr. Clifford and Dr. Hutton in a Zoom session at **7:00 p.m. on August 24th -** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89914589677?pwd=aTYwV2R6Qm8rU25RY0M3QTUvOHNmQT09> Meeting ID: 899 1458 9677 Passcode: 044057 One tap mobile +16468769923,,89914589677#,,,,,0#,,044057# US (New York)

How important is sleep for those with epilepsy? Molly Ehlman Potter says, “Getting a good night’s sleep is important for everyone, but it’s even more critical if you have epilepsy. Why the close relationship between sleep and epilepsy? Seizure disorders like epilepsy cause a “misfiring” of activity in your brain, the very organ that regulates your sleep. So, when your brain is malfunctioning because of your seizures, your sleep suffers. And when your sleep suffers, your brain becomes more vulnerable to these mis-firings that cause seizures in the first place. It’s a vicious cycle.” A Norwegian study of 794 patients with epilepsy concluded that the most common triggers for seizures were emotional stress, sleep deprivation and tiredness. For people with epilepsy, healthy sleep is essential for effective control of seizures. As you can see, people with epilepsy deal with a myriad of problems because of their disorder that goes beyond seizure control.

A team of researchers from the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada conducted a study about the sleep patterns of children with epilepsy and the sleep patterns of their siblings without epilepsy. The results indicate that children with epilepsy had a significantly higher rate of sleep disturbance and that their disturbed sleep is associated with greater social and attention problems and a reduced quality of life. They also have a higher rate of attention deficit hyperactivity syndrome and other learning, emotional and behavioral difficulties compared to children without epilepsy. The results of this study support the idea that healthy sleep is essential for children with epilepsy.

Sleep problems are a double-edged sword for children with epilepsy; epilepsy disturbs sleep and sleep deprivation aggravates epilepsy. The drugs used to treat epilepsy may also disturb sleep. Because a lack of sleep is a trigger for seizures, achieving healthy sleep on a nightly basis is

essential. The Citizens United for Research in Epilepsy (CURE) say that sleep difficulties are commonly reported by patients with epilepsy and can have a detrimental impact on overall quality of life.

E.W. Howe said, “There is only one thing people like that is good for them; a good night's sleep.” So, how do we get a good night’s sleep? How many hours of sleep do we need? The number of hours of sleep needed vary from individual to individual. The important factor to remember about sleep is that it is being able to get quality sleep. You know that you have had good quality sleep when you wake up feeling refreshed in the morning. Your level of energy throughout the day is a good indicator that you have had quality sleep.

Another tip to help your child get good quality sleep is to check their eating habits and what they are drinking before going to bed. Children should avoid eating large amounts of food, including junk food, before retiring for the night. Drinking any caffeine before bedtime should be avoided. Caffeine may keep your child from falling asleep and getting the rest they need. You may want to restrict caffeine starting at least 6-8 hours prior to bedtime. What your child eats and drinks before going to sleep can negatively impact their quality of sleep.

Establishing a consistent wake-up time for your child is important in getting quality sleep. You may want to ensure that your child’s wake-up times during the week and on weekends are the same. Sleeping until noon on the weekend is not good. This type of wake-up schedule can throw their body rhythms off schedule. Routines and schedules will help your child get quality sleep.

Be sure to remember that your child’s sleep environment can play an important factor in getting quality sleep. Make sure that you build a proper sleep environment for your child. Their sleep environment is a major deciding factor in sleep health. Make sure that your child’s bedroom is quiet and dark. Turning off all electronics is a start to getting quality sleep. Turn off the television, cell phones, handheld video games, tablets, and computers, because they emit light, which decreases melatonin, the hormone produced by your brain that helps you sleep. Pay attention to the temperature in the room. Make sure that it is not too hot or too cold. Do as much as you can to eliminate distracting noise in the house and around your child’s bedroom. To keep your child from staring at the alarm clock and raising their level of anxiety about not being able to go to sleep, hide their alarm clock or tape a piece of paper over the dial. Have your child avoid doing homework in bed. This may tend to rev your child up and keep them from falling asleep.

Patients with epilepsy can have a comorbid sleep disorder, such as sleep apnea, and find it very difficult to get quality sleep. Sleep apnea can leave a person chronically sleep deprived and tired. Almost a third of people with epilepsy may suffer with undiagnosed sleep apnea, a sleep disorder which is dangerous because of the possible serious consequences. Thirty per cent of those with medically refractory epilepsy are likely to have seizures caused by sleep apnea. The inadequate oxygen caused by apnea may trigger seizures that had previously been well controlled by medications.

Treat any underlying sleep problems. A review published in September 2018 in *Epilepsy Research* found that people with epilepsy are more likely to have sleep disorders, such as obstructive sleep apnea, restless legs syndrome, and insomnia. Know the signs: Feeling excessively tired during the day, snoring while you sleep, or waking up often during the night can signal a sleep disorder. Your doctor might recommend that you see a sleep medicine specialist who can perform certain tests to see exactly what is affecting your sleep. If you are diagnosed with a sleep disorder, taking steps to control it can help calm brain activity and improve your epilepsy.

Beth Malow, M.D., M.S., an assistant professor of neurology at the U-M Health System says, “Any disorder that fragments, or disrupts sleep can change the overall excitability, and irritability, of the brain. You may want to have your child checked out for sleep apnea. People with epilepsy develop sleep disorders at a higher rate than the general population. You may want to consult a sleep specialist and undergo a sleep study if you suspect that your child may have apnea or any other sleep disorder.

As Thomas Dekker said, “Sleep is the golden chain that binds health and our bodies together.” Being tired and not getting enough sleep are common seizure triggers. Quality sleep is critical for good health and especially for those living with epilepsy.

Editor’s Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly.
Always remember – **CARPE DIEM – SEIZE THE DAY!**

Steve.Hutton@epilepsy-ohio.org