Why You Keep Waking Up At The Same Time Every Night

If you're prone to waking up in the middle of the night, this scenario is probably too familiar: You wake up, it's pitch black and your brain immediately knows the time. Maybe it's 3:19 a.m., maybe it's 37 minutes before your alarm goes off. Regardless, it's always around the same time. Suddenly your mind is active in the middle of an otherwise good night's sleep.

According to a global sleep survey conducted by Philips Healthcare, 67% of adults worldwide say they wake up at least once during the night. And while the occasional middle-of-the-night wake-up isn't anything to be alarmed about, doing it consistently can affect your productivity and mood the next day. One study published in the journal Cureus found that sleep deprivation is linked to increased anger and aggression.

So what gives? We asked sleep experts to explain what's happening when you're waking up at the same time every night. Read on for answers, plus tricks to get you back to sleep — or even better, advice to help prevent you from waking up at all.

First, know that we all wake up during sleep. It's the 'same time' part that is a problem.

"Everyone awakens briefly in the middle of the night multiple times — anywhere from five to seven times — between sleep cycles," said Shelby Harris, a licensed psychologist and board-certified behavioral sleep medicine specialist in Westchester, New York, and author of "The Women's Guide to Overcoming Insomnia: Get a Good Night's Sleep Without Relying on Medication." "It is totally normal followed by a quick return to sleep usually with amnesia for the awakening."

But waking up frequently at the same time in the middle of the night is different, and it can mess up your sleep cycles. "When sleep isn't consolidated, one can feel tired, sleepy and foggy during the daytime hours, in addition to getting less sleep at night and disrupting your depth of sleep," Harris said.

Fully waking up each night may be a sign of an underlying health issue.

"People wake up in the night for many potential reasons but some are quite common," said Mark Aloia, global lead for behavior change at Philips Healthcare.

Among these reasons include insomnia (Aloia said about 80% of people with insomnia have awakenings at both the beginning and middle of the night) and obstructive sleep apnea, which is characterized by repeated interruptions in breathing during sleep that may cause someone to wake up in the middle of the night. It's important to get these conditions ruled out by a doctor if you find yourself waking up at the same time in the middle of the night — not just for your sleep's sake but your overall health.

"Sleep-related disturbances like sleep apnea can lead to numerous health problems such as hypertension, heart disease, stroke and diabetes," Aloia said. "It can increase the risk for an irregular heartbeat, worsen heart failure, and even increase the chance of having work-related or driving accidents."

If it's not a health issue, it may be a lifestyle one.

Sad but true: As we get older, we also become lighter sleepers. "Adults tend to have less slow-wave sleep [the deepest phase of non-REM sleep], and as a result, wake up more in the middle of the night," said Terry Cralle, a sleep expert with The Better Sleep Council. In addition, things like noise, lights (ahem, checking your phone when you wake up) and your diet before bed all play a part in how deeply and how long you'll sleep during the night before waking up. "Alcohol in particular can help you fall asleep, but it invariably fragments your second half of the night," Aloia said.

Another issue at play that goes hand-in-hand with age? Your hormonal state, particularly for women. "Pregnancy is a time when sleep gets disrupted from hormonal changes, urination, anxiety and discomfort from a growing belly," Harris said. "As perimenopause hits, hot flashes and night sweats also begin to disrupt sleep quality."

Waking up at the same time at night may be stress-related.

While there's currently no research that explains exactly why we wake up near or around the same time of night, Aloia said it's likely due to hypervigilance or worry. "Many times when we fall asleep with worries, we process these worries during certain stages of sleep," he said. "When we wake with these worries, we have not clearly and fully processed them."

This is why Aloia often recommends those with sleep trouble keep a worry journal next to their bed to write down what's causing them stress and help eliminate middle-of-the-night worry sessions. Harris added that often anticipation of an event — such as a baby that might cry or even the anxiety of wondering if you'll make it through the night without waking up — can cause lighter sleep and lead to wake-ups.

You can retrain your brain to sleep through the night.

First and foremost, it's important to establish a healthy nightly sleep routine. That includes winding down 30 minutes to an hour before bed with no screens, keeping a consistent wake-up and sleep schedule — even on the weekends — and keeping the room at a comfortable temperature. (The Better Sleep Council recommends about 65 degrees Fahrenheit.) Cralle said there are also a few things you can do to specifically help yourself get back to sleep when you are waking up at the same time in the middle of the night. First, stop clock-watching.

"A clock face should not be in your line of sight during the night, and you should not be checking your phone for the time if you do wake up," Cralle said. "When you check the time during the night, you inevitably calculate how long you've been awake, and how long you have left until you need to wake up. This can easily lead to stress and anxiety and make it difficult to fall back asleep."

It's also important to not force sleep. It sounds counterintuitive, but it ends up being another stress-inducing activity. "If you are not asleep in what feels to be about 15 to 20 minutes, get out of bed and do something relaxing and distracting in as dim of lighting as possible," Cralle said. Anything from reading to listening to an audiobook, coloring, knitting, doing a puzzle, or anything else that takes your mind off sleeping helps make you feel sleepy faster. This all will eventually reduce the time you spend staring at the ceiling in place of dreaming.

Article source: http://bit.ly/36EdyI8

This Week's Exercise

V-SITS

HOW TO DO IT:

1. LIE ON YOUR BACK AND REACH YOUR ARMS RIGIDLY TO YOUR SIDE, OFF THE FLOOR. LIFT YOUR LEGS OFF THE FLOOR AND POINT THEM SO THEY ARE AT ABOUT A 45-DEGREE ANGLE. LIFT YOUR HEAD SO YOUR SHOULDERS ARE OFF THE FLOOR AS WELL.
2. WHEN YOU'RE READY TO BEGIN, LIFT YOUR UPPER TORSO OFF THE FLOOR AND BEND YOUR KNEES. YOU CAN LEAN BACK TO MAKE THIS MOVE HARDER OR COME UP MORE TO MAKE IT EASIER. SLOWLY LOWER YOUR UPPER BODY BACK DOWN TO THE FLOOR, STRAIGHTENING OUT YOUR LEGS AS YOU DO SO. STOP WHEN YOUR BACK IS ON THE FLOOR, BUT NOT YOUR HEAD, SHOULDERS, OR LEGS.
3. THIS COMPLETES ONE REP.
4. DO AS MANY REPS AS YOU CAN WITH CORRECT FORM FOR 50 SECONDS.

Source: http://bit.ly/2LZXN6B

Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

MACARONI AND CHEESE SOUP WITH BROCCOLI

Ingredients

4 oz dry elbow pasta or small shape
1 1/2 cups onion, chopped
1 large carrot, chopped
1 celery stalk, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tbsp salted butter
2 tbsp flour
2 1/2 cups fat free low sodium chicken broth, or vegetable broth
1 cup fat free milk
pinch nutmeg
1/2 tsp dry mustard
salt and fresh pepper to taste
2 cups about 10 oz broccoli florets, chopped into small pieces
1-1/2 cups 2% sharp cheddar, best to grate yourself
2 tbsp Parmesan cheese

Directions

1. Boil pasta in salted water according to package directions for al dente. Drain and set aside.
2. Chop onion, carrot, celery, garlic by hand or mini food processor.
3. In a large soup pot or dutch oven, melt light butter. Add chopped vegetables and sauté on low heat until soft, about 5 minutes.
4. Add flour and fresh pepper to the pot and stir until smooth.
5. Slowly add chicken broth, milk, nutmeg and dry mustard powder; whisking constantly.
6. Set heat to medium-low and let it come to a slow boil. Cover and cook on low about 10-15 minutes.
7. Add broccoli florets, parmesan cheese, and stir well. Adjust salt and pepper to taste.
8. Cook uncovered until broccoli is cooked, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and wait until it stops boiling.
9. Add cheddar cheese a little at a time, mixing well until cheese melts.
10. Return the cooked elbows to the soup and mix well, adjust salt and pepper if needed.
11. Eat right away so the pasta doesn't absorb all the broth.

Nutrition Information

Serving: 1cup
Calories: 253kcal
Carbohydrates: 28g
Protein: 17g
Fat: 9.5g
Sodium: 590.4mg
Fiber: 4g
Sugar: 3.5g
Blue Smart Points:6
Green Smart Points:6
Purple Smart Points:6
Points +:7

Recipe source:
http://bit.ly/36y6mNQ