Focus on Sleep

March into the month with a healthy focus on getting enough sleep. Ensure you get all the benefits of sleep with this month’s activities. Learn more by visiting us online at www.magellanhealth.com/member.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.”

- BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

FEATURERED ARTICLE

Can’t Sleep? Crank These Sounds

The sounds you hear (or don’t hear) can make a difference in how you sleep.

Learn more on page 2

FEATURERED ACTIVITY

Savvy Sleep Strategies

Need some help getting to sleep? Savvy strategies can help.

Read more on page 4

VIDEO COACHING SESSION

Sleep Awareness

Good quality sleep is essential for your health and well-being.

Learn more on page 4
Can’t Sleep? Crank These Sounds

Over 70 million Americans suffer from sleep problems like insomnia. But sleep is a fundamental part of a healthy lifestyle, since it gives our bodies some R&R, keeps our brains sharp, and can even improve memory. There’s no one magical formula to catching those Zzzs, but research suggests certain sounds can help us drift off to dreamland. From white noise to the sounds of the Amazon, find out which noises may help us sleep better—and which ones will only leave us with bags under our eyes.

Please Don’t Stop the Music—The Need-To-Know

During sleep, we still perceive sounds and process them in a part of the brain called the auditory cortex. But there’s no need to whisper while gossiping about a sleeping pal—people are much less sensitive to their environment when they’re snoozing than when they’re awake. Our sensitivity to noise varies a lot based on the kinds of brain waves we produce while sleeping. Some people wake up if a feather drops; others can sleep through a fire alarm. The sounds we notice while sleeping or falling asleep can either be alarming or relaxing, says Orfeu Buxton, a neuroscientist at the Sleep Division at Harvard Medical School. Alarming sounds can disrupt the process of falling asleep; relaxing sounds, on the other hand, can help us fall asleep more quickly and sleep more deeply. But it’s not always easy to know whether those Friends reruns on low volume will be soothing or disruptive.

Sleep On It—Your Action Plan

Whether a sound is relaxing or disruptive depends a lot on the individual. Sometimes
we find sounds pleasant because of positive emotional associations, so the sound of man’s best friend barking can be relaxing for a dog person. But there are lots of sounds out there, and it can take some time to figure out which ones work for you. Neuroscientist Hawley Montgomery-Downs of West Virginia University recommends we try specific sounds for at least a few nights to find out if it’s really helping us get a better night’s rest. Try some of the sounds below for a solid chunk of snooze time.

• Make Some (White) Noise. White noise combines all noise frequencies and can mask other sounds, and it sometimes helps treat insomnia. But be wary of white noise apps that can cause auditory nerve damage, Montgomery-Downs warns, especially for those who use headphones or have sensitive hearing. Instead she recommends using a white noise machine, similar to a fan stand, or sites like simplynoise.com.

• Embrace Nature. Ocean waves, rainforest animals, thunderstorms, and even the Chinese giant salamander can all be pleasant sounds to fall asleep to. Natural noises are less likely to annoy us than some other sounds because they usually include fluctuations in amplitude and frequency. But those using rain and ocean sounds should make sure there’s a toilet nearby, since Buxton warns that the sound of water can trigger the need to use the bathroom.

• Play That Funky Music. When a head full of worries is keeping us awake, music can help us relax a little. Avoid music with lyrics that may keep the mind active, and instead try classical, folk, or slow-paced contemporary styles. But if using the radio or TV for music, use a timer, since the noise may disrupt sleep as the night progresses, whether we realize it or not.

• Get personal. Sometimes there’s nothing quite as relaxing as another human voice. Try some of the fancy new apps out there like pzizz, which lulls listeners to sleep with soothing voices, or record a close friend reciting the instructions in a muscle relaxation demo that can guide us into sleep.

• Soak Up the Silence. Some people find no noise is good noise, since it doesn’t have any associations with stress or negative emotions, so give silence a shot.
Savvy Sleep Strategies

If you have trouble getting enough sleep, you’re not alone. While the importance of quality sleep is widely recognized, the CDC reports as many as 70 million Americans suffer from sleep disorders; keeping them from getting the recommended 7-8 hours adults need each night.

Here are some tips that can help:

- Stick to a schedule- Try to go to bed and get up at the same times each day (even on non-workdays).
- Don’t eat or drink caffeine or alcohol close to bedtime to avoid sleep cycle disruptions.
- Close down screens (phones, TV, laptops) two hours before bedtime. Blue light from screens has been shown to alter brain chemicals important to sleep.
- Keep your sleep area cool, dark and free of disturbing noises. Use a fan or other methods to mask unwanted noises you can’t control.
- If worry is keeping you awake, try writing down your concerns to address at a later time. If you put them in a journal, you can literally “close the book” on your anxieties for the night.

Don’t sleep through this one. Reserve your space now at www.magellanhealth.com/member.