

# Sleep tight

## But if you can't, this book offers some suggestions

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### Can't Sleep, Can't Stay Awake

A Woman's Guide to Sleep Disorders

By Dr. Meir Kryger

Harper Collins Canada, 316 pages, \$27

<http://www.guidetosleep.com>

### Reviewed by Brenlee Carrington

**T**HIS important new book will keep readers awake. It might even become a sleeper hit. Written by prominent Winnipeg-based sleep expert Dr. Meir Kryger, this clear, concise and comprehensive work offers relevant and helpful information for anyone tossing and turning about sleep disturbances -- their own or their family's.

Kryger is a respected pioneer in the field of sleep medicine. He opened one of the first sleep laboratories in Canada and edited a standard medical textbook called *Principles and Practice of Sleep Medicine*.

He's past president of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. Currently director of the Sleep Disorders Centre at the St. Boniface Hospital Research Centre, he has treated more than 2,000 female patients with sleep disorders in the past 25 years.

This book's subtitle suggests that it's for women only, but men are likely to find it equally useful.

The topic is one that's under-represented in medical school curricula, according to U.S. sleep expert Dr. Barbara Phillips in the book's foreword.

She notes that the average medical student receives only about one hour of education about sleep and sleep disorders.

The book's statistics surrounding sleep are alarming. "The National Sleep Foundation estimates that four to five million Canadians may be putting themselves at risk for injury and health and behaviour problems because they aren't getting enough sleep to be alert the next day."

Sleepy drivers, Kryger writes, cause an estimated 20 per cent of car accidents.

Kryger also says that women specifically often face lengthy delays in getting the right treatment for their sleep problems.

"It is imperative," he writes, "that more attention be given to the sleep disorders that can cause misery and even death in women."

Chief among these disorders is sleep apnea. This condition "involves episodes of stopping breathing (during sleep) that reduces blood oxygen, causes high blood pressure and stresses the cardiovascular system, which causes heart disease."

The bottom line he writes, is that most people do not appreciate how deadly a sleep disorder can be. Therefore, he says, "it's vitally important" to get a correct diagnosis and treatment.

According to this guide, you probably have a sleep problem if you:

- Are sleepy in the morning.
- Feel tired all day.
- Fall asleep when you don't want to.
- Need to nap.
- Are irritable and moody when you awaken.

For a healthy lifestyle, Kryger writes, "a good night's sleep is as important as healthy eating and adequate exercise."

The book contains useful advice concerning women and sleep disturbances at various phases of their lives including pregnancy and menopause. Even up-to-date research on hormone replacement therapy is included.

There's also excellent advice for children of all ages. For example, youngsters between the ages of five and 12 need between nine and 11 hours of sleep nightly.

Famed author (*How To Solve Your Child's Sleep Problem*) Dr. Richard Ferber's ideas about how to make children fall asleep on their own are also discussed and endorsed. This exhaustive (pun intended) and easy-to-follow guide has tips for dealing with snoring, avoiding jet lag, and how best to cope with shift work.

Insomnia is also explored in depth. Some tips for curing this tiresome problem include limiting alcohol and caffeine and getting lots of exercise -- but not too close to bedtime.

There's also a useful section on how various medications can adversely impact sleep.

*Can't Sleep, Can't Stay Awake* is replete with that rare quality known as common sense. In the end it should help to fulfil Kryger's goal of giving his readers sweet dreams.

*Brenlee Carrington, a Winnipeg lawyer and journalist, sleeps the sleep of a virtuous woman.*

