

Title: Good Nights For Millions

"Good night!" When I was a child, my mother would say this to me every night. It was comforting and helped me to sleep peacefully at night. However, for millions of Japanese, this "Good night." from their family means something quite different: Far from anything "good," it is instead the start of a nightmare. They will struggle just to sleep all through the night. Exhausted rather than rested the next morning, they can hardly grumble "Good morning" to their families. Today I'm standing here to discuss the problem of sleep disorders and how to deal with them.

According to the National Institute of Public Health, one out of five people in Japan has some trouble with their sleep and as many as 10 million people suffer from chronic lack of sleep for more than 1 month in a year. Chronic sleep disorders have harmful effects on our health and daily lives.

A woman named Mariko, who has suffered from a sleep disorder for more than ten years, gives us some idea of what the victims go through. She says, "I need sleep desperately! Even if I'm worn out, I can't sleep. Every morning is a horrible tragedy. I feel dull, tired, irritated, and sleepy!" Chronic lack of sleep has tortured her both physically and mentally. Moreover there are a lot of people who must leave their companies because they are simply unable to get to work on time. We can see clearly some of the costs of sleep disorders: they even deprive people of even their jobs.

Do you, or someone you love, have difficulty in sleeping? If so, what are you doing about it? Now in Japan, few people cope with sleep disorders in the proper way. Among people with sleep disorders, only 5% go to see a doctor. They don't think of sleep disorders as a serious disease. But it's completely wrong not to consult a doctor because, in most instances, there are effective treatments.

In many cases, people try to solve their sleeping problems by themselves. For example, among people who suffer from chronic lack of sleep, 40% try to drink alcohol in order to sleep as a treatment. However it's a terrible mistake; alcohol has the opposite

effect on people's quality of sleep. Alcohol may make you feel sleepy at first, but after a few hours it can disrupt your deep sleep. Frequently, people's misguided efforts to sleep end up causing many more serious problems.

Ladies and gentlemen, now is the time to learn the proper way to deal with sleep disorders because anyone here could be the next victim. Sleep disorders can begin at any stage in one's life, from childhood to old age. Today I would like to suggest two ways to deal with this problem.

First of all, you should correct your so-called "common sense" about sleep and get accurate knowledge. For example, don't drink alcohol or smoke before bedtime. Both reduce your total sleeping time. Instead, you would do better to drink a cup of hot milk because it contains a natural chemical that helps you sleep. It is also useful to have regular sleeping habits. For example, always go to sleep and get up at the same time, even on weekends and holidays. Everyone, please keep it in your mind that accurate knowledge and good habits can promote a good night's sleep.

Secondly, if you've done all you can and still aren't getting a better night's rest, you should consult a doctor as soon as possible. Today doctors do a pretty good job of diagnosing and treating sleep disorders. In most cases, disorders can be treated effectively. Therefore what is needed for us is to regard sleep disorders as a serious health problem. You should not hesitate to consult a doctor if you trouble sleeping.

I believe that if you do your best to sleep and ask doctors for help, all of you can have a good night's sleep and enjoy your daily lives. "Good night" from your family shouldn't mean the start of a nightmare but the start of a comfortable and peaceful sleep. Then, the next day, everybody can say "Good Morning" with a big smile and a refreshed feeling, and really mean it.