

## **Sleep Well**

**with Michael Breus, PhD, ABSM**

### **The Anti-Aging Benefits of a Good Night's Sleep**

I don't have to give you a ton of statistics to prove how hard we try to stay young, energetic, and beautiful. Just consider the number of energy drinks on store shelves, the popularity of Starbucks (which, just this week announced plans to add new drinks or drink sizes that better meet the needs of kids or teens), dramas like *Nip/Tuck*, and reality TV shows like *Extreme Makeover* and the newer *Dr. 90210*, which definitely fulfills a few stereotypes about women seeking the perfect, buxom body in a city like L.A.

In a new book I scanned last week called *Microtrends* by Mark J. Penn, I read some incredible reports on the extent of plastic surgery going on today. The author devotes an entire chapter to "Surgery Lovers," claiming that "Cosmetic procedures, both invasive and noninvasive, have become so popular in America lately that between liposuction, Lasik, nose jobs, and tummy tucks – and the latest favorite, eyelash transplant surgery [what is that?!] – it seems like it's the rare American who hasn't volunteered to go under the knife."

Well, I'm happy to report that I keep the carving knives on my food plate and am not one of the one million men who seek the help of a surgeon. Ten years ago, a man wouldn't be caught dead sitting in the waiting room of a cosmetic surgeon for purely vanity reasons. But today, the tides apparently have changed. Penn predicts a boom in so-

called Aesthetic Medicine, as well as some mighty turf wars among doctors who want to practice it.

I wish the same could be said for Sleep Medicine. I'd welcome the turf war and more opportunities to expound the benefits of sleep – that free asset we all have an opportunity to capture every night sans the sharp edges and bruising. Let me repeat: it's free; there are no risks involved; and it can potentially benefit you in more ways than one. Clearly, a breast augmentation targets one area; sleep can cover an array of areas by virtue of the hormones it releases to repair and rejuvenate the entire body.

Restful sleep can support weight loss; it can sharpen our minds (help us be “insightful”) so our craniums can consolidate our memories and learn new skills; and it can even help us slow down the aging process.

This is all in addition to sleep's positive effects on mood, cellular renewal, productivity, energy levels, and sense of well-being. I don't know about you, but I can't think of any surgical procedure that can cover all these bases. (Full disclosure: sleep won't make you go from a AA to a DDD in bra size. It also won't give you perfect vision if you are near- or short-sighted; I have had Lasik eye surgery. But sleep keeps my eyes feeling refreshed and ready to focus all day long.)

Cosmetic surgery might be on the rise, but guess what: quality sleep is on the downside for the vast majority of Americans. (In fact, in his book Penn also devotes a chapter to the unhealthy trend of “30-Winkers” – Americans who don't get enough sleep.)

Can a chemical peel equate with high-quality sleep for 30 days? Can the results from a procedure like LipoZap, the newest craze in reducing fat

bulges, last as long as the benefits that come with getting a good night's sleep? I'd like to put this to the test. I challenge you to try this at home: spend a month focusing on sleep and see how it transforms you from the inside out. If you need a specific program to follow – especially if sleep doesn't come easily to you or you'd call yourself an "insomniac" – follow along my simple four-week program outlined in my book *Good Night*.

Looking and feeling your best doesn't have to be that ever-elusive grail. And neither does achieving high-quality sleep. If we just stop looking elsewhere for that grail – in the surgeon, in surfing the Internet late at night, in answering every phone call that rings through 24-7, in our cosmetics, and in our daily grinds, we can find what we're seeking really close to home. The anti-age doc is within all of us. And he's waiting for you to acknowledge him.

Sleep tight.