**Sleep and Your Health**

Most of us know that a good night's sleep is healthy; but do we really take that advice seriously? Many times, we brush aside a full night's sleep due to our busy schedules, a need for "down time" that keeps us up, or simply life's circumstances. But a lack of sleep can result in more than just feeling tired (which is bad enough). Medical experts warn that chronic sleep deprivation can have serious effects on your health.

**Here are some health problems that may result from lack of sleep.**

**Cancer**

While not all cancer risks are affected by lack of sleep, studies have indicated that breast and colon cancer risk is greatest for those who work night shifts. Apparently, the exposure to light in the night-time hours reduces the body's production of melatonin. Melatonin is a brain chemical that helps promote healthy sleep, but it may also reduce tumors and protect against cancer as well. The less you sleep, the less melatonin your body manufactures.

**Heart Attacks**

Statistically, heart attacks occur more often in the early morning hours. Experts believe this may have something to do with the particular way that sleep and waking affect the cardiovascular system. Studies have shown that the health problems that often lead to heart disease - obesity, high blood pressure, etc. - are exacerbated by lack of sleep.

**Unhealthy Relationships**

When you don't get enough sleep, you tend to be moody and irritable, which is not good for any relationship. Also, sleep problems may lead to partners sleeping separately, or resentment on the part of one or both of the partners for the problem. This kind of tension may affect any children in the family as well.

**Impaired Cognition**

An inability to think straight or think constructively is a problem associated with sleep deprivation. You may have trouble remembering things, too, if you are not getting enough sleep.

**Injury**

From automobile accidents to accidents on the job, sleep deprivation has been implicated in all sorts of accidental injury situations. The brain just does not react as quickly or efficiently when you are starved of sleep, and clumsiness and mistakes are also symptoms associated with lack of sleep (and accidents).