



Believe it or not, your body wasn't designed to work 9 to 5 without rest. Most executives work even longer hours, however, and when they call it a night, restlessness prevails.

Add hectic business travel--airports, flying, noisy or uncomfortable hotel rooms--to the mix and you've got a recipe for exhaustion. Thank you, anxiety.

In Pictures: Sleep Tips For Business Travelers

Dr. Charles Kimmelman, an ear, nose and throat specialist based in New York City, helps patients who suffer from sleep difficulties as a result of complications while traveling. One of the most common problems is sleep apnea, characterized by interrupted breathing during sleep. Loud snoring is a primary symptom. It afflicts 40% of the U.S. population, he said, and is exacerbated by obesity.

A study released this month by the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention draws a connection between irregular sleep patterns and obesity. A survey of 87,000 adults over two years found that individuals who slept fewer than six hours a night or more than nine, are more likely to be obese. **Kimmelman** works with patients on improving their sleep practices. He is a major proponent of the nap, though he understands that it's impossible for most people in the workforce to abandon their jobs midday to catch some z's.

"Naps are very, very good," he said. "In evolutionary terms, our bodies aren't meant to go 9 to 5."

Explain that to your boss.

Kimmelman said even when people get under the covers at night, some aren't getting quality REM sleep. REM stands for rapid eye movement, which occurs during the deepest phase of sleep. In simplest terms, it's the time your body uses to fuel the mind for that next morning's meeting.

Many people believe that once they fall asleep, the body simply recharges with each passing minute so the feeling of rejuvenation once they're awake after several hours is guaranteed. That's not the case. It's crucial to make this down time as important to your body's efficient functioning as a diet or workout regimen.

"Sleeping, from a physiological point of view, is just as important as weight loss," **Kimmelman** said. "It's an active time. There's a lot going on in the body, and you could harm yourself if you don't pay attention to sleep."

Sleep experts agree, prescription drugs will knock you out for a while but are just a band-aid on a persistent problem and definitely ill-advised during business travel. You can't alter time zones with a pill. Executives suffer the greatest sleep loss when conducting business in a different time zone. Meeting times remain the same. This throws off their circadian rhythm, which is basically the body's timer.

Michael Breus, the sleep expert for WebMD (nasdaq: HLTH - news - people), the Internet-based health information source, wrote a book called Beauty Sleep that addresses this and other sleep problems. He offers tips to business travelers looking for optimum sleeping conditions when they're on the road or in the air.

Breus coaches clients on everything from how to book the right flight to picking the hotel most conducive to one's sleep needs. There's more involved than you'd think. Sometimes the trick is actually getting back to the hotel to make up for lost sleep when it's all go, go, go Monday to Friday.

"You can't make up for all of it though," Breus said. "Sleeping late on weekends or taking a nap when you're riding the bus can definitely be helpful."