

## **WCCO-AM Radio Interview: Allina Health Sleep Expert Advocates for Afternoon Naps**

WCCO-AM: Joining us now is Dr. Andrew Stiehm from Allina Health Supports and we're going to talk about how and when, which may surprise you, to get the best sleep. Dr. Stiehm welcome to the program.

Dr. Stiehm: Oh, thank you so much for having me.

WCCO-AM: Is this really true what I'm reading that we're supposed to take naps during the workday?

Dr. Stiehm: Supposed to is probably too dramatic a characterization - -

WCCO-AM: Okay.

Dr. Stiehm: - - but I think there's definitely a benefit to napping during the workday for many of us.

WCCO-AM: Is this even a possibility? I mean we work. I can't just say to my boss, "I'm going to go lay down for a few hours."

Dr. Stiehm: Yeah, and it's not very American, because most of us think that that's time wasted, but now let me tell you instead, if I had a tool I could give you that would help you be an hour more productive in your afternoon - so in the same four hours you could do more wouldn't you grasp that tool?

WCCO-AM: Absolutely of course. Mmm hmm.

Dr. Stiehm: And so that's the power of napping for many of us and so there is a study of NASA astronauts as an example that showed these astronauts when they were given a 40-minute nap in the middle of their day. After their nap, they were 100% more alert and 40 percent more productive.

WCCO-AM: Really?

Dr. Stiehm: And so this is a tremendous benefit to napping. If you think you know 40-years ago we were given 15-minute breaks to go smoke a cigarette that's a tremendous waste of time.

WCCO-AM: Clearly.

Dr. Stiehm: But instead if we give our employees a 40-minute nap opportunity many of them become more productive, happy, healthier employees. That's a win for everybody.

WCCO-AM: So 40-minutes. So where do they go during the daytime? Do they nap at their desk?

Dr. Stiehm: Well, and so many different companies are coming up with different strategies. The Huffington Post as an example actually has a nap room and so a place you can go that's quiet and dark with a good environment to go take a nap if you so choose. Now this isn't right for everyone but for those who need it and benefit from it, it's a wonderful opportunity.

WCCO-AM: That's amazing, so a nap room, you could close the door and do your thing.

Dr. Stiehm: Absolutely, it's about creating the right environment. You know for many of us if we're sufficiently sleep deprived our computer can become the right environment, you know a chair and a quiet moment.

WCCO-AM: Sure, sure, sure.

Dr. Stiehm: A lot of us need a little bit more, you know, we need some quiet. We need some dark. We need a space where we know someone's not going to come busting through our door but give us the right space and environment, we'll find a way to get in 20 minutes of zzz's.

WCCO-AM: Let's talk about the sleep desert that is happening at least in this country. I know other countries still siesta and that is a beautiful, beautiful thing but what is happening in the sleep arena for American's these days? Is anybody getting enough sleep?

Dr. Stiehm: You know, 40 percent of Americans are sleep deprived and that's an unfortunate trend.

WCCO-AM: I'm surprised there's not more.

Dr. Stiehm: Any given week it certainly will be more. I mean the American way is to sleep deprive Monday through Friday and then try to catch up on the weekend. That's not a healthy habit.

WCCO-AM: Mmm hmm.

Dr. Stiehm: But that's kind of the American way, but if you look at 40 percent of adults we're not getting the recommended amount of sleep.

WCCO-AM: And is it about hours or is it about quality of sleep?

Dr. Stiehm: It's a little bit about both.

WCCO-AM: Okay.

Dr. Stiehm: But hours I think is where people should put their focus, the typical adult kind of age 18 to 65 only between seven and nine hours of sleep. There's an academic conversation about how many need to be at one block. You know do I need nine hours straight of sleep or can I do seven hours and then you know get a longer nap in elsewhere? But I think most of us aren't even getting that seven to nine hours of recommended sleep.

WCCO-AM: Right. What's the answer on that because I do know people, for example, morning show news anchors or people who work overnights who try to sleep in shifts? Is that acceptable?

Dr. Stiehm: Depending on the significance of that first shift that you sleep in it may be. I mean there's no, there certainly are people that sleep in shifts and so they get six hours here and then get another two hours elsewhere in their day. And as long as they're kinda getting the seven to nine hours of sleep that's fine, but if you're sleeping two hours here, two hours there that's probably not good enough.

WCCO-AM: Okay.

Dr. Stiehm: So you really need one dominant sleep period.

WCCO-AM: With a minimum of what six hours?

Dr. Stiehm: Six hours would probably be about the best.

WCCO-AM: About the minimum, okay, well, I know Arianna Huffington you mentioned Huffington Post, I know they have, she has a new book out about sleep because when she was starting her business she got no sleep and I'm sure it nearly put her under because it can be extraordinarily damaging. And I'm speaking with Dr. Andrew Stiehm of Allina Health and Dr. Stiehm talk to us about the dangers of not enough sleep because we all blow it off. "Oh yeah, I'll sleep when I'm dead, or I'll catch up on the weekend." My 12-year old actually tells me this, "Well, I'll just catch up on the weekend." And I don't think that's how it works is it?

Dr. Stiehm: It isn't how it works. There are short-term and long-term consequences to getting insufficient sleep and so the long-term consequences include death. People who get habitually less than six hours of sleep do die younger. They have more diabetes, higher blood pressure, more heart attacks and more strokes. I mean there definitely is a consequence to not getting enough sleep in the long-term. But even in the short-term people who aren't getting enough sleep, we've all felt this. We nod off driving. There's an increase incidence of automobile accidents. If you look at daylight savings time – the day after we fall back to where most of us are sleep deprived acutely because we lost an hour of sleep, there is a sharp jump in the number of automobile accidents that occur that next couple days.

WCCO-AM: Really. What about folks who say, “Okay, look, I try to get to sleep on time. You know lights out by 11 o’clock. I don’t have to get up till 7, but I can’t get quality of sleep.” They wake up in the middle of the night. They have to pee in the middle of the night. Do you recommend medication for that?

Dr. Stiehm: Medications usually aren’t the first line choice for trying to get a good night sleep. There’s usually some problem. Insomnia, I like to tell my patients is a symptom of some other problem. For instance, you articulated I have to wake up to pee.

WCCO-AM: Yes.

Dr. Stiehm: So the problem isn’t that you’re waking up, the problem is you’re waking up to urinate and so that would suggest some other problem that we need to evaluate. Another common problem and I think the one I hear the most of is, “I can’t fall asleep because I can’t turn off my mind.”

WCCO-AM: Oh, yes.

Dr. Stiehm: Well, the problem isn’t that you can’t fall asleep. The problem is that you can’t turn off your mind and that’s the problem that we have to talk about.

WCCO-AM: Mmm what meditation? Yoga? What do you say?

Dr. Stiehm: Well, the most effective therapy is this thing we call cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia and it’s kind of a catchall term where we give you a multiplicity of behavioral techniques that can actually help you fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer. A very common sleeping pill out there is a medicine called Zolpidem or the brand name is Ambien and if you compare cognitive-behavioral therapies, so these behavioral things that we teach you, the meditation, guided imagery and other behavioral therapies and compare it to the medicine Ambien. People who do cognitive behavioral therapy actually fall asleep faster and sleep more at night than people who take pills and there’s no side effect.

WCCO-AM: Okay, so what is this therapy? How do you do it?

Dr. Stiehm: So there are in general two ways to administer it, one, is with a self-help directed approach and the other is actually one-on-one with a psychologist. And so there’s another year of training that some psychologists pursue in behavioral sleep medicine where they’re actually trained to administer this therapy but a lot of people prefer the self-help approach and for those people I think a wonderful resource that I commonly use is this book called *No More Sleepless Nights*. It’s written by a Dr. Peter Hauri. I think it’s filled with a wonderful array of resources to help you learn to relax and to go to sleep at night.

WCCO-AM: Sleep is so elusive and it's so delicious and so necessary. It's, I'm glad to talk to you tonight but back to the original idea. Do you really think nap rooms will catch on in other workplaces?

Dr. Stiehm: I think there are some workplaces where it can and some workplaces where it won't. I mean I can't get an ER to shutdown for an hour so everyone can take a nap.

WCCO-AM: No.

Dr. Stiehm: But are there some places in corporate America where I could tell an employer, "You know what, if you give your employees a 40-minute opportunity in the middle of the afternoon to take a break, they'll be more productive. They'll be more creative. They'll have a better mood. They'll have less absenteeism and they'll do more in the time that's left."

WCCO-AM: I love that.

Dr. Stiehm: I think there's a compelling argument that that's a worthwhile endeavor.

WCCO-AM: Yeah, I could see it probably working in like an agency where you have creative people. I don't know that a radio station would work for us but I can't - -

Dr. Stiehm: There'd be a lot of dead air I think.

WCCO-AM: Yeah. It'd be kinda boring, wouldn't really work. Dr. Andrew Stiehm this has been a fascinating conversation. Thank you so much for joining us, and terrific advice tonight. Thank you, sir.

Dr. Stiehm: The pleasure is mine. Again, thank you for having me.

WCCO-AM: You got it. Great stuff. I love the nap room idea. Maybe it's not possible for me but getting more sleep certainly would benefit everybody.