Introduction to Cognitive Decline

Hi, I'm Dr. Susan Sklar and I want to give you the thought of the week. We've been delving deeply into the issue of cognitive decline. It certainly is one of big issues on people's minds.

You know that one in three seniors will end up with Alzheimer's or other types of dementia and we have a program at the Sklars Center that helps with prevention and stabilization of people who have cognitive declines or mild Alzheimer.

So the issue I want to talk to you about today has to do with sleep.

Why Sleep Matters for Health

I know people are heavily focused on productivity. There's a lot of pressure at work to get things done. People have family responsibilities, grandchildren, parents, and if there's one area that people tend to short themselves on in their self-care, it frequently is sleep, And this is something I really want you to reconsider.

There are some areas that are clear that related to lack of sleep, some health problems. Diabetes, weight, and cognition.

Sleep, Deep Rest, and Brain Cleanup

So if you shorten yourself on sleep you're affecting how your blood sugar is utilized and putting yourself at increased risk of diabetes, which I think the general public knows, will shorten your life and shorten it in a very cruel way.

As far as weight goes, we know there are a tremendous number of problems that come from excess weight, particularly excess body fat. And cognition is one of them.

Body fat's been associated with cognitive problems, increased risk of it, increase risk cancer, particular breast cancer in women. So maintenance of a healthy weight is very important.

Getting adequate sleep is important for that. And then on the issue of cognition, during the night when you're in deep sleep, a number of things happen.

One of the things that happens is you release a human growth hormone, which is not a growth hormones, it's really a healing hormone. And it helps with repairing many of thing that happen during a day to your body, the wear and tear, damage of everyday life, and that occurs when your in a deep The other thing that happens when you're in deep sleep is activation of something called the glymphatic system.

It sounds like lymphatic, but it's glympatic and it is a system in your brain of circulating fluid. that circulates again when you're asleep. And what happens is your brain size, believe it or not, shrinks down during the night when your in deep sleep, allowing this fluid to circulate.

Sleep Hygiene and Closing Advice

This fluid is like the garbage pickup. The garbage trucks, they empty the big garbage containers and take it away so the city streets remain nice and clean.

Well, the glymphatic system does the same thing in your brain. It picks up the garbage that's accumulated during the day and takes it away so that your brains can function better.

This is essential to preventing cognitive decline along with the other medical issues that I discussed. So don't short yourself on sleep. You need to have good sleep hygiene and it's obvious things.

I know you know them. turning off your electronics an hour before you're going to go to sleep, dimming the lights, having a bedtime routine, have a set bedtime, and allowing yourself seven to eight hours of sleep.

I know you can do it, you know it's important, I'll see you later.