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Ontario Temporarily Moving to Modified Step 2 of the Roadmap to Reopen

In response to recent trends that show an alarming increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations, the Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, is temporarily moving the province into Step Two of its Roadmap to Reopen with modifications that take into account the province's successful vaccination efforts.

These time-limited measures will help blunt transmission and prevent hospitalizations from becoming overwhelmed as the province continues to accelerate its booster dose rollout. As part of the province's response to the Omicron variant, starting January 5, students will pivot to remote learning with free emergency child care planned for school-aged children of health care and other eligible frontline workers. "As we continue with our provincial vaccine booster efforts, we must look at every option to slow the spread of the highly contagious Omicron variant," said Premier

Doug Ford. "Putting these targeted and time-limited measures in place will give us more opportunity to deliver vaccines to all Ontarians and ensure everyone has maximum protection against this virus." Unlike other variants throughout the pandemic, evolving data is showing that while the Omicron variant is less severe, its high transmissibility has resulted in a larger number of hospital admissions relative to ICU admissions. Staff absenteeism is also

Expected to rise and affect operations in workplaces across Ontario due to Omicron infection and exposure, including in hospitals and schools.

In response, the province will return to the modified version of Step Two of the Roadmap to Reopen effective Wednesday, January 5, 2022 at 12:01 a.m. for at least 21 days (until January 26, 2022), subject to trends in public health and health system indicators.

As of January 2, 2022, more than 27 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been administered, with more than 90 per cent of Ontarians aged 12 and over having received at least one dose and more than 88 per cent having received at least a second dose.

More than 43 per cent of children aged five to 11 have received their first dose and over 3.7 million booster doses have been administered including to 47 per cent of individuals aged 50 and over and more than 31 per cent of individuals aged 18 and over. These are some of the measures:

- Reducing social gathering limits to five people indoors and 10 people outdoors.
- Limiting capacity at organized public events to five people indoors.
- Requiring businesses and organizations to ensure employees work remotely unless the nature of their work requires them to be on-site.
- Limiting capacity at indoor weddings, funerals, and religious services, rites and ceremonies to 50 per cent capacity of the particular room. Outdoor services are limited to the number of people that can maintain 2 metres of physical distance. Social gatherings associated with these services must adhere to the social gathering limits.
- Retail settings, including shopping malls, permitted at 50 per cent capacity. For shopping malls physical distancing will be required in line-ups, loitering will not be permitted and food courts will be required to close.

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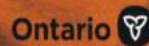
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3 simple tips to boost your health at home



(NC) For many of us, it's been tricky to create or maintain healthy habits while the world continues to be so topsy turvy. To help you be healthy, follow these three simple tips:

Stay active – keep moving.

We all know this one, but it's important. There are countless online workouts and yoga classes to try for free or by subscription, but you can also dance while cooking or doing the dishes, take jumping jack breaks, or go for a walk to mark the end of your workday. Every move counts, and so try to bring the fun into everyday activities.

Get the right set up – ease your pain

After a couple of years of working from home, it's time to get serious about your home office setup if you haven't already. Though you may be back in the office part or most of the time, hybrid work is likely here to stay.

Whatever your workspace looks like, making it ergonomic is crucial. It'll save you a lot of neck and back pain or discomfort, eye strain and visits to chiropractors. Do your research and ask your friends and family what's worked for them to help you find the best fit.

Make sure your home is safe – test for radon Radon is a radioactive gas that's in all our homes. If your home has a high level of radon, all the time you're spending at home these days could be increasing your exposure and your risk of lung cancer. Long-term exposure to elevated levels of radon is the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. The only way to know the radon level in your home is to test. You can buy an inexpensive DIY kit or have a professional come in and do the test for you. Find more information about radon testing at canada.ca/radon.

Brain health tips for older adults



(NC) Practicing healthy habits can help you live well throughout your life. Not only do they promote general overall health, but they also have the added benefit of reducing your risk of developing dementia.

Dementia can affect anyone. There's currently no cure and some risk factors like genetics can't be changed. Fortunately, there are many things you can do throughout your life to help reduce your risk of developing the condition. Here are some ideas to help:

1. Be active

- Try new activities you've always wanted to adopt — whether that's snowshoeing, hiking or salsa dancing.

- Vary your fitness routine to avoid boredom.
- Go outside to get some fresh air.

2. Stay social

- Reach out to old friends to catch up.
- Make new friends by joining a group activity — even if it's virtual.

3. Eat a well-balanced diet

- Plan your meals in advance so you have ingredients on hand.

- Frozen vegetables are convenient and are often less expensive than fresh. They're great for soups and stir-fries.

- Try a new recipe each week and develop a roster of your favourite healthy recipes.

4. Challenge your brain

- Learn how to play a new musical instrument or study a new language.
- Try a familiar task or activity in a new way: go for a walk in a new-to-you neighbourhood or Park.

Find more information at canada.ca/dementia.

3 key steps to remember before buying or selling your home

(NC) Entering the real estate market is big moment for anyone. And, whether you're buying or selling your first home or your fourth, it's also a major transaction. Taking a few simple steps can help make the process as smooth and successful as possible. Here are three to Remember:

1. Consider your wants and needs

Before you buy or sell, it's important to think about what you value and what you want versus what you need. For example, is a big backyard a dealbreaker for you? Or, would you be okay with a tiny outdoor space if you found the right home? If you're selling, is it the price that matters the most? Or is a short closing that puts money in your hand faster more important?

2. Interview your agent

Everyone knows someone who knows a real estate agent. It can be tempting to make a quick choice and go with that friend of the family or in-law. While they could be the right person in the end, it's important to interview at least a couple of different agents to find the right fit. Real estate agents often have different specialties or mindsets and approaches that may or may not click with you. By having a chat with a few people, you'll know you're setting up a successful partnership.

3. Test for radon

Radon is a radioactive gas that comes from uranium in the ground that can get into your home undetected. All homes have some level of radon. However, long-term exposure to elevated levels increases your risk of developing lung cancer – in fact, it's the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers.

If you're selling your home, reassure buyers about radon levels. And if you're buying, it's a good idea to do radon testing as well as your standard home inspection. You can purchase an easy do-it-yourself radon test kit or hire a certified professional. Costs to fix high radon levels are comparable to updating your furnace or air conditioner. Find more information at canada.ca/radon.



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Know the cost of breaking your mortgage

(NC) With all the news about the hot housing market and interest rates, you may be thinking about your mortgage. Should you put your house on the market? Consider switching lenders to get a better deal? Should you go with a fixed or variable rate? A longer- or shorter-term mortgage?

If breaking your mortgage is factoring into your decision, make sure you understand the pros, cons and associated costs of doing so.

The cost to break your mortgage contract depends on whether it's open or closed. An open mortgage allows you to break your contract without paying a prepayment penalty. But if you break your closed mortgage contract, you normally have to pay a penalty that can cost thousands of dollars. You may also have to pay other fees such as administration fees, appraisal fees, reinvestment fees or a mortgage discharge fee.

Here are some pros and cons of breaking a mortgage:

Pros

- You may get a lower interest rate, which you can look in for the new term of the mortgage.
- You may be able to pay off your mortgage faster if you keep your payments the same.

Cons

- You could end up paying more in the long run because of fees and a prepayment penalty.
- You may no longer qualify for a mortgage under the current economic conditions.

By breaking your contract, you may also have to repay any cash back you received when you first signed up for it. Cash back is an optional feature where your lender gives you a percentage of your mortgage amount in cash. Read through your current mortgage contract carefully and speak with your bank about your options.

Find more tips and resources at canada.ca/money.



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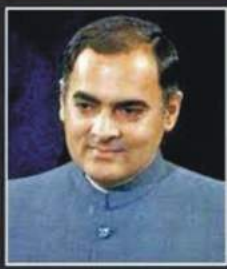
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ACTIVATING THE DORMANT 13TH AMENDMENT OF 1987

By: Thambu Kanagasabai - Former Lecturer in Law, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka



By: Thambu Kanagasabai - LLM [London] Former Lecturer in Law, University of Colombo.

The 1987 13th Amendment, a conceived and delivered baby of India under the Indo/Sri Lanka Accord of 1987 for adoption by Sri Lanka has been lying in the constitution of Sri Lanka partly implemented and mostly ignored by the Sri Lankan Governments since then. This 13th Amendment is now activated and given new life and blood by the Tamil leaders due to the deteriorating and worsening political situation of Tamils in the hands of the current Government of Rajapaksa family. It has to be noted that the election manifestos of Tamil parties contain the following important election pledges since independence from the British in 1948:

- Federal form of Government from 1948 to 1976
- A separate state for Tamils or TAMIL EELAM from 1976 to 2009• North -East merger.
- The right of self-determination
- Recognition of North and East as Tamils' historically inhabited homeland.

Now the Tamil leaders for the time being are unanimously pledging and vowing to implement the earlier discredited 13th Amendment including their determination to work for and achieve a federal form of Government using the 13th Amendment as a starting point. In this respect some of the salient provisions of the 13th Amendment can be detailed as below:

- The 13th Amendment contains three lists of powers allocated to the Provincial Council and Central Government
- They are the reserve List of Central Government
- Concurrent list of both Provincial Council and Central Government
- Exclusive list of Provincial Council

The Provincial Council list contains the following powers meant for its exercise, execution and functions.

- Law and order
- Land and land settlement
- Education

The above powers though appear to grant full authority and control for the Provincial Council, yet they are almost deceptive and toothless. The Governor being appointed by the Central Government acting as its agent, the Central Government in fact and really holds the whip hand and switches to on and off the powers of the Provincial Councils.

The Governor assent to any legislation passed by the Provincial Council and the Central Government rights to dissolve and or withhold consent to Bills of Provincial Councils which appear to be controversial or appear to affect and harm the national policy and the interest of the Central Government like security and creating disharmony among the community's security erode the unfettered and independent functioning of the Provincial Government. For instance, the Provincial Council during its functioning from 1988 to 2018 has simply failed to set up a Police Force allowed for it due to the hue and cry from the extremist Sinhala parties, Buddhist Monks and racist opposition leaders. The Provincial Council which came into existence in 1988 has totally failed to exercise its granted powers to implement all the provisions and powers of the 13th Amendment due to lack of political will and determination coupled with the fears of the sword of Damocles hanging over their heads in the form of a Government appointed Governor and a hostile Sinhala/Buddhist majoritarian Government.

However and whatever shortcomings of the Provincial Councils system, the Provincial Councils in the North and East are vested with some executive and legislative but chopped powers over the Lands and Properties in the North and East. As such the powers under the Provincial Councils have to be fully executed and the condition that the powers under the Concurrent List must be executed with the consent of the Governor need to be reviewed and the Tamil parties and leaders must agitate to make the necessary Amendments to allocate those powers under the Provincial List.

However, it has to be stated that Sri Lanka on its own will not take any moves to implement the 13th Amendment even if willing due to the possible protests and opposition from Sinhala Buddhists, Buddhist Clergy and extremist political leaders and parties. Therefore, the duty, responsibility and burden lie and fall on India, the mother of 13th Amendment to ensure and promote its full implementation.

This is a responsibility which India cannot shirk or abandon Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987 [Signed in Colombo on 29th July, between Indian Prime Minister and Sri Lankan President J. R. Jayewardene] as this is an International Agreement deposited with International Treaties at the Depository of International Treaties. The last surviving hope of the Tamils in the North and East is this Accord which at least fulfills some of the accumulated problems of the Tamils, though this Accord cannot be resorted to stop and prevent the Sinhalaisation, Buddhisation and Militarization which are proceeding at a faster pace aiming to liquidate the Tamils as a distinct race, their language, culture and traditions.

The Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987 could be the last straw to catch, and cling on by the Tamils to ensure their survival and prevent their extinction and drowning in the sea of majoritarianism, communalism and racism which are the armory of the Sinhala, Buddhist political parties to secure and entrench a Sinhala, Buddhist State in Sri Lanka.

A Provincial Council possessing its listed powers and the Concurrent listed powers with restrictions and vetoing powers of Governor including the powers of dissolving the Provincial Council by the Central Government on the grounds of security and sovereignty could be considered as fulfilling some meagre aspirations and needs of North and East Tamil Inhabitants. Therefore, India owes a greater responsibility to ensure its enacted and imposed Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987 is fully implemented by Sri Lanka to vindicate its strong credibility and not allow it to lapse or be curtailed and devalued by the Sri Lankan Government which is in no mood to honor this Accord even if risking the wrath of India.

It is therefore, more than justifiable, right and proper for the Tamil National Alliance and other Tamil parties to fall back on India to ensure its full implementation by Sri Lanka which is incorporated in its Constitution since 1987. Above all India carries the moral duty and responsibility to uphold accountability and human rights as a member of UNHRC and United Nations as well as a Superpower and neighbour of Sri Lanka. Any delay and neglect of this duty will only feed and foster militancy on the part of the aggrieved victims and fester the underlying unhealed wounds of injustice and denial of accountability to spiral out of control.

It is worth to quote M.C.M Iqbals' comment on 19th January 2009 "In short the executive and legislative powers of the Provincial Councils continue to be with the President and executed by the Governor he appoints while the Governor exercises such powers with the assistance and advice of the Chief Minister, the members of the Board of Ministers and through the member of the Public Service. The Chief Minister and members of the Board of Ministers cannot defy the Governor authority."

Thambu Kanagasabai - Former Lecturer in Law, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

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தைப்பொங்கல் வரலாறு

ஆடி மாதத்தில் தேடி விதைத்த பயிர்களின் விளைச்சலை அறுவடை செய்து பயன் அடையும் பருவமே தை மாதம் ஆகும். அந்த அறுவடையில் கிடைத்த நெல்லின் புத்தரிசியைச் சருக்கரை, பால், நெய் சேர்த்துப் புதுப் பாணியில் புத்தரிசியில் கொதிக்க வைத்துப் பொங்கல் சோறாக்கிக் சூரியனுக்கும் மட்டுக்கும் படைத்து உண்டு மகிழும் விழாவே பொங்கல் விழாவாகும்.

நீர் வளம் கொண்ட இடங்களில் மூன்று வேளாண்மை நடக்கும். நீர் வளமில்லா இடங்களில் மழை நீர்த் தேக்கத்தால் ஒரு வேளாண்மைதான் விளைக்க முடியும். ஆகவே, மார்கழி (சிலை) அல்லது தை (சறவை) மாத அறுவடையே நாடெங்கும் நிகழும். அறுவடை முடிந்து பெற்ற புத்தரிசி, கரும்பு, மஞ்சள், பனங்கிழங்கு, நம்முடைய கொடிவழிக் காய்கறிகள் (குறிப்பாக அவரை, புடலை, கத்திரி, வாழை, சர்க்கரை வள்ளிக் கிழங்கு, கருணைக் கிழங்கு போன்றவையே படைவலக வைக்கப்படும். செந்நெற் பச்சரிசியைப் பெரும்பாலும் தவிடு போக்காமல் நீர் சேர்த்துச் சமைத்து பருப்புக் குழம்புடன் உண்பதும் மரபு. பொங்கு என்ற சொல் கொதித்தல், மிகுதல், சமைத்தல், செழித்தல் எனப் பொருள்படும். பொங்குவதால் பொங்கல். பொங்கல் விழாவை தமிழர் என்னும் இனக்குழு தொடர்பான விழா என்று தெளிவாக உணரமுடியும். இந்த விழாவின் நடைமுறையைப் பார்த்தால், மெய்யியல் சமயங்கள் தமிழகத்தில் நிலைகொள்ளுவதற்கு முன்னாலிருந்தே, இனக்குழு வழிபாடுகள் நிலவிய போதே, இந்த விழாக் கொண்டாடுவது தொடங்கியிருக்க முடியும் என்பதையும் புரிந்து கொள்ள இயலும். ஜி.எஸ்

தமிழர் தேசிய விழா

பொங்கல் விழாவை தமிழர் தேசிய விழாவாக பலர் கருதுகின்றனர். பொங்கலை தமிழர்கள் சமயங்களைக் கடந்து கொண்டாடும் வழக்கமும் உள்ளது. கிருத்துவர்கள் தங்கள் தேவாலயங்களில் கரும்புடன் பொங்கல் வைத்து கொண்டாடுகின்றனர். தமிழ் முஸ்லிம்களில் பல குடும்பங்களில் பொங்கலன்று சர்க்கரைப் பொங்கலுடன் 16 வகைக் காய்கறிகளைச் சமைத்துச் சிறப்பு விருந்தாக குடும்பத்தினருடன் உண்பதும், பொங்கல் நாளன்று விட்டில் அசைவ உணவுகளை தவிர்கும் வழக்கமும் உள்ளது.

உழவர் திருநாள்

பொங்கல் விழா, மக்களால் இயல்பாகக் கொண்டாடப்படுகிறது. உழைக்கும் தமிழ் மக்கள் தாமே கண்டுள்ளது, தமது உழைப்பிற்கு உதவிய இயற்கைக்கும், தம்மோடு சேர்ந்து உழைத்த கால்நடைகளுக்கும், தமது நன்றியையும் மகிழ்ச்சியையும் தெரிவிக்கும் விழா. உழவர்கள் மழையின் உதவியால் ஆடி மாதம் முதல் உழைத்துச் சேர்த்த நெல்லை மார்கழியில் விட்டிற்குக் கொண்டு வந்து தமது உழைப்பின் பயனை சூகரத் தொடங்கும் நாளே தைப்பொங்கல்.

பொங்க வைக்கும் முறை

தைப்பொங்கலுக்குச் சில நாட்களுக்கு முன்னரே தயாராகத் தொடங்கும். பொங்கலுக்குத் தேவையான பொருள்களை ஆயத்தப்படுத்திக் கொள்வர். தமிழீழம், தமிழ்நாடு போன்ற இடங்களில் புதுப்பானைகளை பலர் வாங்குவர்.



4 tips for staying healthy this winter

(NC) Most of us are venturing out of our homes more often this

(NC) Most of us are venturing out of our homes more often this winter, with schools and offices reopening. This means it's important to do everything we can to stay healthy for an enjoyable season. Here are some tips to remember:

1. Eat a balanced diet.

What we put in our body fuels us and helps protect us. Even though the holidays and hibernating on the couch during weekends can tempt us to reach for processed snacks, balance out indulgences with more nutritious foods. Fresh fruits and veggies are available throughout the season, so be sure to take advantage of them, and remember to include whole grains and lean proteins.

2. Get enough exercise.

Moving our bodies is great for boosting immunity and mood. Whether you prefer the gym or walking around the block, the key is to have regular physical activity. If you're just starting out or don't know what to do in the cold, try something new like snowshoeing or ice skating. Try partnering up with a friend or family member to get some quality time together and maintain motivation.

3. Visit your doctor.

Many of us have neglected regular checkups and doctor's visits during the pandemic. But staying on top of these can make sure you're healthy and able to fight off colds and viruses. Check that your vaccines are up to date, that any bloodwork required is being done and that you have a time booked for your physical. Don't forget to make appointments with specialists, like your therapist or dermatologist.

4. Drink fresher water.

Canadian private and public drinking water supplies are generally of excellent quality. Whether it's supplied by a municipal system or a private water well, water can carry contaminants that are harmful or cause the water to taste off. Use a DIY at-home test kit from My Water Quality to make sure your water is pure. Simply follow the instructions and use the courier service that is included with the testing kit to ship your sample to an accredited laboratory. An easy-to-read report card will arrive within five to 20 days and provide you with all the results. Find more information at mywaterquality.ca.



Outdoor activities to do with your kids this winter

(NC) Many of us are dreading another pandemic winter cooped up at home. But instead of worrying, now is the time to plan some fun things to do with the family outside the house when it's cold or snowy.

Here are some creative ideas kids and parents are sure to love:

Embrace friluftsliving

We've all heard of hygge, the Danish idea of a cozy home. This year, you can try another Scandinavian concept called friluftsliv. Part of Norwegian culture, it literally means "free air life" and is all about being one with nature even when the weather isn't ideal. Go for a walk in the park and pay attention to your surroundings, whether it's the soft song of winter birds or the beauty of a fresh snowfall.

Try something new

There are plenty of fun winter sports we've heard of but never given a try. Why not challenge the whole family to explore a new activity? Curling, snowshoeing and ice fishing are easy enough for almost all ages and can be quickly learned while practicing social distancing. Not feeling too sporty? You can try snow sculpting or painting a gorgeous wintry landscape.

Go on a local road trip

While a vacation to a tropical beach may be out of the question, there are many beautiful and exciting places to explore in your own province. Whether it's a day trip or weekend getaway, look for something an hour or two away that piques your interest, like a vast lake, hiking trail or frozen waterfall.

Before hitting the road, make sure to keep your family safe by installing winter tires on your vehicle. While not all tires are created equally and performances vary, the differences become greater when a tire wears. So choose one built to last, like the Michelin X-Ice Snow, which has been tested and proven in Nordic test centres under the most rigorous and extreme winter driving conditions.



Feel unsafe driving in a snowstorm? How to build confidence

(NC) As Canadian drivers, we still need to get to our destinations whether the forecast calls for clear skies or a major storm. But if you feel unsure driving in heavy snow, you're not alone. According to a recent survey, one in five Canadians feel unsafe driving on winter roads, and 42 per cent are particularly concerned about black ice. Fortunately, there are ways to stay in control of the situation as you navigate treacherous weather. Here are some tips from the experts at OK Tire:

Keep a well-stocked emergency kit.

This can include a portable phone charger, extra warm clothes, jumper cables, shovel, salt, snow brush and ice scraper. You may also want to include an AutoSock, a new generation of winter traction technology that's a great alternative to metal chains and can help whenever you are stuck.

Know how your car behaves on ice.

If you drive on black ice, your vehicle will not respond as well to driver inputs, similar to if you were driving on regular ice. Anticipate where black ice can form and remain vigilant. For example, if your route includes travel over a bridge, there's no ground insulation to keep the temperature constant and condensation can freeze into smooth, bubble-free black ice. Similarly, with sunless tunnels and overpasses the moisture left by drivers' tailpipes can freeze into black ice. In any icy road scenario, avoid over-correcting with the steering wheel or panic braking.

Ensure you have the right tires.

Before braving any winter driving, you should feel confidence in your tires. If you are dealing with the possibility of blizzard conditions, studded tires can provide you with superior grip and braking capabilities for improved vehicle control on icy roads.

While we cannot eliminate the extremes of Canada's winters, we can at least prepare ourselves. If conditions are too dangerous, consider staying home and off the roads altogether.



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Connecting GTA is an above average business group. The members are extremely supportive and welcoming. Their events are fun and educational. In my 20 years of business I have experienced many business groups. This one is different. I highly recommend it. *-Angela Baltkois*



About CGTA

The Connecting GTA Networking Club was founded by Suresh Kumar, President & CEO of Kashden Consulting Group.

Suresh is passionate about delivering value in every connection that he makes. As a Specialist Business Strategist & Coach, he revels in efficiently maximizing potential and fostering professional relationships within organizations. And as the Founder and CEO of Connecting GTA, he is dedicated to help propel your business forward.

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Ways to Beat Insomnia

In my experience and research

Sleep is a necessity, it is not a luxury.

It is vital, as eating is to one survival.

It goes without saying that a good night sleep is essential not only for waking up fresh in the mornings, it essential for functioning normally throughout the day. It's also essential for going about the day eventualities with a positive outlook with all cognitive faculties working.

Ultimately sleep is necessary for maintaining a healthy body and a healthy mind in the long term. Natural Awakenings magazine in its article on quelling insomnia warns, Prolonged lack of quality sleep compromises health and sets the stage for depression, high blood pressure, obesity, inflammation, poor memory and even serious risk of heart attack. It is recommended that a person must have 8 hours of sleep (that on an average 1/3 of one life).

In any event an adult requires a minimum of 6 hours sleep at the least. Sadly for many it not always possible to go to sleep as soon as the head touches the pillow - the number of people suffering from insomnia is alarmingly high. The following Do and Don'ts I have compiled may help those who have difficulty sleeping.

- *1. Staying active during the day would help.
- *2. Exercising, walking, doing a bit of cardio and Yoga before dinner (or supper), close to but not too close to & sleep time; and devoting enough time to unwind after, is an approach that has helped me.
- *3. Avoiding napping at day time is advisable (although a short power nap mid-day is said to be healthy).
- *4. Avoiding eating late: eating by sunset and giving the body enough time to digest, absorb and assimilate the food would ensure a more restful sleep.
- *5. Performing such daily rituals before bed time, like having a warm bath or shower, washing the face and brushing the teeth and tongue and combing the hair, even soaking the feet in hot water and Epsom salt, would help. If suffering from body pain, an ice-pack placed on the body part that's painful and then a hot water bottle placed there, before bed, for comfort, could help too.
- *6. Wearing fresh and clean clothing that's soft and loose is preferable - ideally cotton or woolen fabrics, those which can breathe including socks matter a lot.
- *7. Changing the mattress and pillow if it's too worn out and using fresh clean linen are things to consider. In cold weather a good heating system, and a warm duvet or blanket are useful to have.

Conversely in warm weather, sleeping on the floor on a thick blanket or mat, with windows opened might work for some. *8. Avoiding having the television placed in the bedroom and refraining from checking the phone, computer or social media at least one hour before retiring to bed, is a must. The bedroom must be used exclusively for sleeping.

- *9. Switching off the lights in the bedroom and shutting off all light coming from outside as a preparatory move and getting to bed early - by 10 pm, latest 11 pm is vital. Keeping regular hours by allowing one's body clock to work naturally by day, and by night unaffected, would help towards regulating sleep time, preventing sleep deprivation. The biological clock - also referred to, & the circadian rhythm, or circadian cycle, is a natural, internal process that regulates the sleep-wake cycle and repeats roughly every 24 hours.

The biological clock of Yogis is programmed to sleep at 9 pm and to wake up at 4 am at Brahma Muhurtham known to be the best time to meditate. *10. Going to bed as soon as darkness sets in is a good habit. It would in turn help trigger the pineal gland to produce the body own sleep inducing hormone, Melatonin in its most natural form as opposed to taking pills. The pineal gland (located deep in the center of the brain) known in Yoga as the third eye, when activated also releases Serotonin, the feel good hormone, a mood stabilizer that boosts feelings of well-being and happiness and can help towards better sleep. Siddhars recommend applying pressure on the space between the eyebrows with the finger for a few minutes to stimulate the pineal gland to induce sleep; while according to Acupressure there are five pressure points in the body that can be stimulated to treat insomnia, which one can do on their own:

<https://www.healthline.com/health/pressure-points-for-sleep>

- *11. Running a diffuser with essential oils like lavender and sage could induce sleep. Air purifiers to clean the air we breathe and humidifiers to moisten the air if it's too dry - can all help.

- *12. Drinking a cup of warm milk (or Almond milk) before bed with turmeric (anti-inflammatory) or nutmeg powder (sedative) or cloves, or cardamoms, cinnamon or almond powder and honey added for sweetness is known to help. Eating a Banana before bed would help too - minerals such as magnesium and potassium in Banana is found to relax the muscles. *13. Maintaining a healthy gut is important for quality sleep; poor diet can cause an imbalance in the gut flora impacting sleep. More pro-biotic and pre-biotic foods can help increase good bacteria and reduce bad bacteria promoting gut health. Probiotics and Prebiotics are explained thus: Probiotics are beneficial bacteria found in certain foods (fermented foods) or supplements. Prebiotics are types of fiber that feed the friendly bacteria in the digestive system. Tripala powder (made of three medicinal herbs - Amla, Bibhitaki and Haritaki), is also known to cleanse the gut, which I have been taking. It's been found that, "constipation and insomnia are common bedfellows." Anyhow constipation issues should never be neglected and allowed to persist. Alternatively to Tripala, in my experience, a drink



made with a teaspoon of Psyllium husk powder and a teaspoon of Flax seed powder added to a full glass of warm water and mixed well, and taken before bed, would ensure a good motion in the morning.

- *14. Clearing congestion in the nasal passage and easing blocked sinuses through the practice of Yoga is a sure fire way to breathe easy - which is key to undisturbed sleep. Nothing can be worse than a blocked nose or Sinusitis to show up to disrupt sleep. Pranayama techniques such as Kapalapati, Bhastrika, Ujjayi (sound of the sea breath) and Alternate Nostril Breathing are highly recommended to ease respiratory issues. Inhaling steam, with a few drops of eucalyptus oil or Vicks added or inhaling a combination of Carom (Ajwain) seeds, Turmeric, Tulsi and Mint leaves boiled in water could help clear sinuses or a blocked nose that can otherwise leave persons breathing through the mouth. Inhaling through the nose is definitely a no, no - a habit that could cause soreness and irritation of the throat and could be symptomatic of other problems. (There are only two Pranayama techniques which require inhaling through the mouth - the Seethali and Sitkari Pranayama, both designed to cool down the body.) *15. Relaxing the body, before bed, especially when the mind and or body, particularly the legs feel restless, by releasing the tension in each body part - from head to toe, coupled with mindful breathing to calm the mind, is a good technique to quiet the body and mind - referred to as corpse pose or Yoga Nidra.

If this doesn't work, the body might do well to practice some Yoga moves before resting in corpse pose: practicing certain relaxing Pranayama techniques mentioned above, as well as Asanas (poses) designed to release tension, like the child pose, reclined butterfly pose, happy child pose and more; even simply keeping both legs raised in a straight upright position (a variation of Vibarita Karani in Yoga), and if possible leaning the legs on the wall or bed head; all combined, might just be what the doctor ordered. Such Pranayama techniques to strengthen the upper airway muscles together with the restorative Asanas suggested above can help reduce the severity of Sleep Apnea - a sleep disorder that can affect One quality of sleep and poses a serious health hazard which needs to be addressed without delay in consultation with experts.

- *16. Sleeping positions can help or hinder sleep. Sleeping on the left side would warm up the body and help with digestion. Sleeping on the right side would encourage deeper sleep. It best to begin by sleeping on the left side and turning over to sleeping on the right side later at night.

Persons who sleep soundly do make that turn to the right side naturally. Lying flat on the back or on the stomach is not advisable - lying on the back can aggravate back issues and lying on the stomach can obstruct healthy breathing. The way the pillow or pillows are placed can be helpful too. When sleeping with the head resting on the pillow, making sure the inside edge of the pillow is in line with the shoulder can help; placing another in between the knees can help too. *17. Chanting mantras, reciting hymns, practicing sleep inducing Mudhras, praying, and meditating would help calm the mind and relax the body. *18. In other words moving from fight or flight mode - when the body's sympathetic nervous system is functioning, to rest and relax mode - when the parasympathetic nervous system gets activated, would

help tremendously to calm the nerves, regulate the release of stress hormones like Cortisol, heal the body and mind and also help promote a good night's sleep. The practice of Yoga can do just that.

- *19. The Harvard Health Blog, in a national survey found more than 55% of people who practice yoga slept better leading to less stress. Read the Harvard article: & Yoga for better sleep, to know more.

On a personal note, worrying or harboring grudges or being fearful of this that and the other, can keep you awake - no doubt they are sleep worst enemies. Yoga helps in renewing one faith in oneself and in the Power of the Divine which is there within us to harness. A total surrender of the ego, coupled with a strong belief that, & everything will be alright, & would be the right attitude to have - that would leave you sleeping like a baby.

Any or all of the tips given here may be tried to see what works. Your own suggestions would be greatly appreciated.

It is hoped the above natural methods, I have put together to beating insomnia are helpful. Always consult your doctor. Usha S Sri Skanda Rajah Usha.goldensunrise@gmail.com Yoga empowers - Contact me to join our free Yoga sessions.

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