

YOUR DENTIST CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

The mysterious REM sleep and why it is important

Scientists have long been fascinated by sleep. How it functions and the benefits we derive from a good night's sleep. And why poor sleep habits can impact our immune system and health.

Despite reams of research sleep remains mysterious. And no element of sleep is more mysterious than the phenomenon of dreams which occur in the sleep phase referred to as "REM", or Rapid Eye Movement. REM is one of five phases of sleep. During a typical night, we cycle through the five stages of non-REM and REM sleep several times. In phase one your body is falling asleep. In phase two we drift into steady sleep -- eyes stop moving, body temperature falls, and the brain is managing fewer tasks. In phases 3 and 4 we enter deep sleep. Our breathing, heart rate, body temperature, and brain activity slow to the lowest level. This is the stage that helps us feel rested in the morning. But as the night progresses deep sleep reduces and stage five or REM sleep increases and with

it -- we begin to dream. • Our eyes dart back and forth. These eye movements may correspond with what we are "seeing" in your dream. • While muscles in our eyes, face, fingers, and toes can still twitch, we lose muscle tone.



Dr. Gabrielle F. Cannick

• Our nervous system kicks in activating our body's fight or flight response.

Scientists speculate REM sleep is associated with our survival instinct, so we are ready to immediately respond to a threat. Still, Scientists have much more to learn about the REM dream phase. New research suggests REM may play a role in enabling us to store memories, regulate our mood, and process emotions. REM may enable us to learn new skills -- giving our brains the ability to adapt or change over time. It was thought our brains

stopped growing after childhood. Scientists now believe the brain may continue growing and changing throughout our lives making it possible to change dysfunctional patterns of thinking and behaving and to even develop new mindsets and new abilities!

Research is ongoing to determine just how REM sleep impacts our mental and physical health. But what we do know is getting a full night's sleep—seven to nine hours—and sticking with a regular bedtime schedule every night is important.

And for a variety of reasons more and more of us are having trouble sleeping.

This is an issue dear to my heart. Our dental practice is a member of the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine (AADSM). We work with local primary care physicians who diagnose and treat persons with sleep issues. If you think you have a problem, you can log on to our web site at sleepwellanderson.com and take the short quiz to determine if you need help. While there you can also request a free "sleep con-

sultation". Together we can evaluate your issues and discuss options. If you have any questions, feel free to call us. We are here to help you. Think of us as your hometown resource for guidance and support.

Dr. Gabrielle F. Cannick is the owner of Grand Oaks Dental, located at 3905 Liberty Highway in Anderson. A strong believer that dental fear and anxiety should not prevent any patient from receiving the highest quality dental care, Dr. Cannick has received extensive training in Sedation Dentistry and is a certified member of the Dental Organization for Conscious Sedation. She is also a member of the South Carolina Dental Association, the American Dental Association, the Academy of General Dentistry, and the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine.

For more information about Grand Oaks Dental and the services provided, please call 864-224-0809 or visit grandoaksdental.com or [facebook.com/GrandOaksDental](https://www.facebook.com/GrandOaksDental).



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