

# A Review Of Normative Sleep Guidelines In Unani Medicine: Theoretical Insights

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## Abstract

In the Unani System of Medicine, more emphasis is given on proper care of health in daily life, and sleep is one of the important needs that have to be fulfilled. A normal sleep is very important as it affects our physical, mental, and emotional status of our body. Recent studies have highlighted a global rise in sleep-related disorders, indicating that poor quality of sleep and insomnia are becoming widespread public health concerns. Nowadays, sleep-related disorders are occurring at a high rate. Therefore, it is essential to emphasize the importance of sound sleep. This paper explores proper guidelines regarding the attainment of normal sleep, which has been mentioned in the USM. These guidelines include the perfect time, proper duration, correct posture, and a comfortable environment (bed and bedroom) for sleep, in light of USM.

**Keywords** –Normal Sleep, Unani Medicine, Insomnia, Naum wa yaqza, Asbab Sitta Zaruria.

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## INTRODUCTION

We spend approximately one-third of our lives asleep.<sup>1</sup> Sleep is one of the basic needs of human beings. Sleep is a vital and significant aspect of our lives. A regular, healthy life depends on getting good quality sleep. Sleep is essential for maintaining both mental and physical well-being. Sleep affects almost all parts of the body, like the brain, heart, and lungs. Many studies have been done that indicate abnormal patterns of sleep may cause many diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, obesity, depression, anxiety, mental disorders, etc.<sup>1</sup> In the case of children and the adolescent age group, sleep helps growth and development. Sleep enables the body to repair itself and maintain overall fitness.

According to the Sleep Foundation, people between the ages of 18 and 64 should get 7 to 9 hours of sleep every day, while those over 65 should get 7 to 8 hours.<sup>2</sup> Sleep deprivation is an emerging problem known as insomnia. Insomnia is a sleep disturbance when a person suffers from difficulty falling asleep, maintaining deep sleep, and restoring sleep after awakening.<sup>3</sup> Insomnia affects approximately 20% of the adult population.<sup>3</sup> Symptoms of insomnia may occur in 33% to 50% of the adult population, either occasionally or persistently.<sup>3</sup> Insomnia is more prevalent in women than in men, and it ranges from 10% to 30% in women.<sup>3</sup>

In Unani System of Medicine, there is an important concept of Asbab sitta zaruriya, also called as six essential factors.<sup>4,5</sup> Asbab sitta zaruriya includes hawa (air), makool wa mashroob (food and drink), harkat wa sukoon badni (physical activity and rest), markat wa sukoon nafsani (mental activity and rest), naum wa yaqza (sleep and wakefulness), ehtebas wa istifragh (retention and evacuation).<sup>6</sup> Naum wa yaqza (sleep and wakefulness) is the 5<sup>th</sup> essential factor.<sup>5</sup> Any disturbance or abnormality in sleep and awakening leads to adverse effects on the body.

## CONCEPT OF SLEEP IN UNANI MEDICINE

Sleep is defined as the inactivity/relaxation of all senses and their movement towards dakhile-badan (inside the body).<sup>7</sup> According to Avicenna, sleep resembles rest, and awakens resembles activity. Sleep directs the innate heat inwards and strengthens the quwa tabiya (physical faculty) and relaxes quwa nafsania (nervous faculty).<sup>8,9</sup> The

average amount of sleep helps quwa nafsania to function properly. It relaxes quwa muharrika (motor faculty) and quwa mudarrika (perceptive faculty), which comes under quwa nafsania.

An adequate amount of sleep increases jauhar (roohe nafsani, i.e, psychic soul) and awakens, increases the dispersion of the jauhar rooh (essence of soul), whether it is roohe tabiya or roohe nafsani.<sup>9</sup> Razi has said normal sleep is responsible for taskeen (satisfaction) and taqwiyat (strength) in the body.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle has elaborated that sleep is an important requirement related to the activity of the heart from which motion and perception arise.<sup>1</sup> Abu Sahel Maseehi has explained that sleep induces the production of good akhlat (humours).<sup>10</sup> There are four humours khilte dam (blood), khilte balgham (phlegm), khilte safra (yellow bile), khilte sauda (black bile). If all four humours of the body are balanced in kaifiyat (qualities) and keemiyat (quantity), then it is musakkin (sedative) and murattib (moistens) for the body.<sup>10</sup>

Razi has said that sleep produces dam-e-mahmood (good blood).<sup>1</sup> Dam mahmood is that type of khilt dam which is red, odorless, and latif (subtle and sweet in texture). Ibn Sina also states that sleep promotes good digestion and overcomes the weakness that occurs due to every kind of dissolution.<sup>9</sup>

In Unani classical literature, there is a description of two types of sleep disorders, i.e, kasrate naum (excessive sleep) and kasrate bedari/sehar (excessive wakefulness /insomnia). Kasrate naum occurs due to excessive barudat wa ratubat (coldness and accumulation of moisture) where as kasrate bedarri occurs due to excess hararat wa yabusat (hotness and dryness) in the body.<sup>11</sup>

#### **WHY SLEEP IS NECESSARY?**

Rooh (pneuma) is lateef (subtle), bukhari (gaseous) matter, and can dissipate easily with physical or mental movement.<sup>12</sup> During awakens, rooh dissipates because every movement and activity is muhallil (i.e., breaks or dissolves the rooh), while rooh cannot be revived during awakens. Mulla Nafees described that for the formation of new rooh, there is a need for pure and lateef (subtle) blood. For the formation of new rooh, there is also a need for hazam jaiyad (good digestion), and for hazam jaiyad, sleep is required. During awakens, nafs (soul) is busy or involved in vital activities like sensation and voluntary activity, so it can't digest the food properly to get lateef blood for formation of new rooh. So, there is a need of sleep so that rooh and quwa will gather in batin (inner side) and the process of digestion will complete to its full extent.<sup>12</sup>

#### **TYPES OF SLEEP ACCORDING TO USM**

According to USM, sleep is of two types tabaii (normal sleep) and ghayr tabaii (abnormal sleep).

#### **TABAII NEEND (NORMAL SLEEP)-**

Sleep, which is restful, uninterrupted, and of sufficient duration according to age, allows the body and mind to recover, repair, and function optimally. According to Ibn Hubal Baghdadi, natural sleep is a condition when nervous faculty retracts itself from the exterior of the body to inwards and leaves off sensory and motor functions of the body, and ultimately purpose of sleep is to provide rest to nervous faculty.<sup>13,11</sup> During normal sleep if mada (matters) in the body is also normal then hararat ghareezi (innate heat) moves andrrone badan (inside the body) and responsible for nuzuj (maturation) and digestion of the mada.

#### **GHAYR TABAII NEEND (ABNORMAL SLEEP)-**

Abnormal sleep refers to any disturbance or deviation from a normal pattern of sleep that affects its quality, duration, and continuity, leading to impaired physical, mental, or emotional functioning. In abnormal sleep person suffers from difficulty in falling asleep (insomnia), excessive sleepiness during daytime (hypersomnia), frequent night awakening, breathing disturbance (sleep apnea), and irregular sleep-wake cycle. Abnormal sleep may lead to various types of diseases such as sehar (insomnia), anxiety, depression, obesity, mental disorders, etc. In Unani classical literature, there is a description of two types of sleep disorders, kasrate naum (excessive sleep) and kasrate bedari/sehar (excessive wakefulness /insomnia). kasrate naum occurs due to excessive barudat wa ratubat (coldness and accumulation of moisture) and kasrate bedarri occurs due to excess hararat wa yabusat (hotness and dryness) in the body.<sup>11</sup>

#### **CONCEPT OF SEHAR (INSOMNIA) IN USM**

In classical Unani literature, various Unani scholars have described sehar in their books. Ibn Sina and Akbar Arzaani state that the excessive awakening is known as sehar.<sup>14</sup> Hakeem Azam Khan described that insomnia occurs mainly due to hararat wa yabusat (hotness and dryness) in the brain, and a little due to morbid phlegm, yellow and black bile. Majusi states that sleeplessness is called sehar.<sup>15</sup> According to Allama Kabiruddin, sehar leads to dissolution of power, which weakens the brain and also causes poor digestion.<sup>11</sup> Insomnia mostly occurs due to excessive dryness in the brain.<sup>16</sup> It is caused by dryness of weather and environment, anxiety, stress, grief, depression, spicy foods, excessive intake of meat, tea, coffee, and the use of certain medications.<sup>11</sup>

## ETIOLOGY OF SEHAR

There may be three main causes of sehar described in Unani classical literature, such as aarzi asbab (temporary causes), marzi asbab (pathological causes), and ikhthiyaari asbab (optional /voluntary causes).<sup>17,18,19</sup>

### 1. Aarzi asbab (temporary causes)<sup>17,18</sup>

Aarzi asbab are those factors that lead to awakening, but after their removal, sleep is restored. These factors are as follows.

- Fear
- Happiness
- Stress
- Sadness
- Emotion

### 2. Marzi asbab (pathological factors)<sup>17,18</sup>

These are some disease-causing factors that may be responsible for sehar. Sue mijaz yabis sada (abnormal simple dry temperament) and sue mijaz haar sada (abnormal simple hot temperament) of the brain are important causes of sehar.

- Sue mijaz barid yabis maddi, and sue mijaz haar yabis maddi of the brain.
- Sauda ghayr tabii (abnormal black bile) and safra ghayr tabaii (abnormal yellow bile) of brain.
- Balgham shor (morbid phlegm) and excess ratubat (fluid) in the brain.
- Other causative factors are fever, pain, indigestion, prolonged labor, ekhtenaqur rehim (hysteria), mania, and jaundice.

### 3. Ekhtiyaari asbab (voluntary causes)<sup>17,18</sup>

These factors are under the control of human beings that would be responsible for sehar, such as

- Busy schedule and excess load of work.
- Improper diet intake that causes yabusat (dryness) in the brain.
- Heavy diet and fatty food intake cause heaviness in the stomach.
- Excess intake of hot and dry food material leads to the formation of haar yabis akhlaat (hot and dry humours) leads to sehar.
- Late night study.
- Excess use of mobile and television.
- Online games.
- Social networking addictions.

## EFFECTS OF INSOMNIA ON THE BODY

- Excess awakening leads to dissolution of quwwa (power), which weakens the brain and leads to indigestion.<sup>3</sup>
- Hippocrates described that insomnia produces disorientation and spasm.<sup>20</sup>
- It leads to dissolution of madda (matter) and increases the appetite.<sup>5</sup>
- Sehar produces yabusat (dryness) and hararat (hotness) in the body.<sup>15</sup>
- Sehar produces heejani kaifiyat (anxiety) in the body.<sup>21</sup>
- Body becomes lean and thin.<sup>21</sup>
- Quantity of mirrah (bile) increases in the body.<sup>21</sup>
- There occurs dominancy of safravi akhlaat (yellow bile) in the body.<sup>10,22</sup>

## GUIDELINES TO ADOPT TABAII NEEND (NORMAL SLEEP)

Guidelines have been given in USM for the attainment of good quality of sleep; following them, one could have truly benefit of sound sleep.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD SLEEP

In Unani System of Medicine certain criterias are mentioned which indicate perfect sleep are as follows.

- Sleep is perfect when it is deep and continuous, and no interruption occurs during sleep.<sup>5,9,12</sup>
- Sound sleep is when food is digested from the upper gastrointestinal tract to the lower GIT, and nafakh (bloating) and qaraqar (rumbling) are slowed, because in the presence of flatus, sleep is neither comfortable nor continuous.<sup>5,9</sup>
- Sleep in khalo-e-meda (empty stomach) is not beneficial because quwa (power) becomes weak.<sup>12</sup>
- Sleeping in imtela-e-meda (full stomach) when food is in the upper part of the stomach is also harmful.<sup>12</sup> In a full stomach, a person can't have sound sleep as it is accompanied by restlessness and disturbance because as the body starts usual process of digestion, sleep is interrupted again and again, and it leads to weakness of the system with impairment of digestion.<sup>9</sup>

## IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP AT NIGHT VERSUS SLEEP DURING DAYTIME-

In classical literature, there is a description regarding the benefits of sleep at night and the disadvantages of sleep during daytime.

### SLEEP AT NIGHT

- Sleeping at night is more beneficial as it is continuous, full, and generally not disturbed by any factors.
- Sleeping at night helps in hazam (digestion) and proper nuzuj (maturation) of food.<sup>8,15</sup>
- Sleeping in moonlight is muharrike dam (blood stimulant) because moonlight causes excitation in blood fluid.
- The person who has a habit of sleeping during daytime, should not stop that immediately, but avoid it gradually.<sup>9</sup>

### SLEEP IN DAYTIME

- Sleeping in daytime is harmful as it produces amraz ratubiya (phlegmatic disease) and various types of amraz nazla (catarrhal diseases).<sup>9</sup>
- Sleeping in daytime decreases appetite and may cause spleen disorders.<sup>9</sup>
- Sleeping in daytime discolors the face and decreases hararat ghareezi (innate heat) because during sleep, hararat ghareezi moves towards batin (inner side) and does not get enough food to digest and uses ratubat asliya (inherent fluid) of the body, and ultimately, hararat ghareezi becomes weak.
- Nafsani quwwat (psychic faculty) becomes weak and lethargy, which leads to a lack of sharpness, or the mind becomes dull.<sup>5,8</sup>
- There may be a foul smell from the mouth.<sup>5,8</sup>
- The person who has a habit of sleeping in daytime should not stop it suddenly but try to leave the habit gradually.<sup>5,9</sup>
- Sleeping in sunlight causes heaviness and headache.

## DURATION OF NORMAL SLEEP

In Unani classical literature, it is illustrated that when the body is tired and onerous, then one should not awaken vigorously. If the mind is alert, active, and senses are intensified as well as feeling energetic for activities, then one should not try to sleep unnecessarily.<sup>21</sup>

- A person should follow a fixed time for going to bed to sleep, and this pattern should be followed consistently.<sup>9</sup>
- If a hot water bath is taken after digestion of food, it produces sleep, particularly if plenty of lukewarm water is poured over the head.<sup>9</sup>
- The duration of sleep should be motadil (normal), neither too long nor too short.<sup>5,9</sup>

**RECOMMENDATION OF SLEEP ACCORDING TO AGE:**

Unani philosopher, Majusi, states that the right amount of sleep mainly depends on age and the temperament of the body. From zamana-e-shabab (youth) up to the age of 35 years (sine waqf), the recommended sleep duration is at least 9 hours. After the age of 35, a minimum of 6 hours of sleep is necessary.<sup>15</sup>

**Table No. 1: The Sleep Foundation recommends the duration of sleep according to different age groups as follows.<sup>2</sup>**

Age Group	Age Range	Recommended durations of Sleep per Day
New born	0-3 Months	14-17 Hours
Infant	4-11 Months	12-15 Hours
Toddler	1-2 Years	11-14 Hours
Pre-school	3-5 Years	10-13 Hours
School-Age	6-13 Years	9-11 Hours
Teen	14-17 Years	8-10 Hours
Young Adult	18-25 Years	7-9 Hours
Adult	26-64 Years	7-9 Hours
Older Adult	65 Years	7-8 Hours

**QUALITY OF BEDROOM FOR SLEEP**

Bedroom should be designed in such a way that it promotes and support restful sleep.

- The bedroom should be slightly dark.
- The bedroom should be properly ventilated.
- The air in the room should be motadil (normal) neither too hot nor too cold and should not be foul-smelling rather, it should be aromatic.<sup>21</sup>

**QUALITY OF BED FOR SLEEP**

A comfortable and supportive bed is crucial for achieving restful sleep.

- Bed should be neither too hot, causing sweating, nor too cold, causing shivering.<sup>21</sup>
- One should sleep on the floor with a soft mattress because a hard mattress may cause abrasion of asaab (nerve).
- One should not sleep on the floor without a mattress, as the coldness of the floor reaches to asaab (nerves).
- In cold season, one should sleep on a cotton or silk mattress.
- In the summer season, one should sleep on a normal and leather mattress.
- The bed for sleep should not be too hot, as the body starts sweating and nor too cold the body gets trembling.<sup>21</sup>
- The bed should not be too wet nor too dry rather, it should be normal in all aspects.<sup>21</sup>
- Place of sleep should not be foul-smelling, rather, it should be aromatic because aroma promotes sleep.<sup>21</sup>
- One should cover the body with a cloth before sleep.<sup>4,9</sup>

**CORRECT POSTURE FOR SLEEP**

Maintaining correct sleep posture is essential for healthy sleep.

- The best posture for sleep is that a person should first lie on the right lateral recumbent position and then turn back to the left lateral recumbent position.<sup>9</sup>
- A person should not sleep in the supine position as it increases the tendency of incompetent diseases like sakta (syncope), falij (paralysis), kaboos (nightmare), because fuzulaat (waste matter) is diverted from the foremost/anterior part of the brain to the rear end and ceases the front-line path from where fuzulat balghhamiya (phlegmatic matter) excretes out through munkhareen (nostrils) and talu (palate).<sup>9</sup>
- Pillow should always be slightly higher than the bed so that the lower portion of the body is slightly lower with respect to the upper portion, because if the upper part is lower with respect to the lower, then indigestion occurs.<sup>4</sup>

## DISCUSSION

According to the Sleep Foundation, individuals aged between 18 and 64 years are advised to obtain 7 to 9 hours of sleep daily, while those aged 65 and above should aim for 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night.<sup>2</sup> Insomnia is a sleep disturbance when a person suffers from difficulty in falling asleep, maintaining deep sleep, and restoring sleep after awakening.<sup>3</sup> Insomnia affects approximately 20% of the adult population.<sup>3</sup> Symptoms of insomnia may occur in 33% to 50% of the adult population, either occasionally or persistently.<sup>3</sup> Epidemiological studies indicate that insomnia is more common in women than in men, with prevalence rates in women ranging from 10% to 30%.<sup>3</sup>

Unani Classical literature described insomnia with the term “Sehar”. It causes the dissipation of rooh (vital pneuma) and hararat ghareezi (innate heat), thereby impairing the digestive process and subsequently diminishing the quality and quantity of both healthy blood and rooh.<sup>9,12</sup> Abnormal sleep leads to the production of abnormal bilious humors, disorientation, muscle fatigue, and spasm in the body. Ancient Unani Physicians like Hippocrates, Razi, Ibn Sina, Akbar Arzaani, etc., have described sehar, its causes, and its effects on the body. Unani Scholars have described proper guidelines for the attainment of good quality of sleep.

In guidelines, there is a description of proper timing of sleep, such as people are advised to follow a fixed time for going to bed consistently.<sup>9</sup> Sleeping at night helps in hazam (digestion) and proper nuzuj (maturation) of food.<sup>8,15</sup> Sleeping in daytime should be avoided, as it decreases hararat gareezi (innate heat) and quwa nafsania (psychic faculty) of the body.<sup>9</sup> Sleep in day time may produce amraz ratubiya (phlegmatic disease) and various types of amraz nazla (catarrhal diseases).<sup>5,8</sup> Duration of sleep mainly depends on age and temperament of the body. The duration of sleep should be motadil (normal), neither too long nor too short.<sup>5,9</sup> From zamana-e-shabab (youth) up to the age of 35 years (sine waquf), the recommended sleep duration is at least 9 hours. After the age of 35, a minimum of 6 hours of sleep is necessary.<sup>15</sup> The bedroom should be properly ventilated, the air in the room should be moatadil (adequate), neither too hot nor too cold, and should be slightly aromatic.<sup>21</sup> Persons are not advised to sleep on the floor without a mattress as the coldness of the floor affects to asaab (nerves). The bed for sleep should not be too hot, as the body starts sweating and nor too cold, as the body gets trembling.<sup>21</sup> One should cover the body with a cloth before sleep.<sup>4,9</sup> The best posture of sleep for a person, he should first lie in right lateral recumbent position and then turn back to left lateral recumbent position.<sup>9</sup> It is important to go in bed after almost three hours of sunset and complete the sleep cycle as required according to age. Most of the time, people do not follow the recommended guidelines for healthy sleep. As a result, their normal sleep patterns gradually become disrupted. Over time, this may lead to insomnia, which can further result in complications such as irritability, headaches, loss of concentration, and various sleep-related disorders. This review article compiles the concepts and guidelines mentioned in Unani literature. Further work is needed to describe these in accordance with modern literature and relevant research articles published on this topic.

## CONCLUSION

The Unani system of medicine provides comprehensive guidelines for maintaining healthy sleep, emphasizing proper timing, duration, posture, and environment. By following the guidelines of sleep, mentioned in USM, people will get truly benefit from good sleep for a healthy life. These classical guidelines highlight the importance of balanced sleep in preserving physical and mental health. Failure to follow sleep hygiene can lead to insomnia and associated disorders. This study compiles Unani perspectives on sleep and highlights the need for further integration with contemporary research to enhance understanding and support holistic approaches to healthy sleep.

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