

# TADISO TIMES

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## IMPORTANT NEWS.....

**President's Day is Monday, February 15, 2021 and clinic hours will be 6am-1:45pm.**

**Tadiso recognizes Black History Month, February 2021.**

## HOW AN AFRICAN SLAVE IN BOSTON HELPED SAVE GENERATIONS FROM SMALLPOX

The news was terrifying to colonists in Massachusetts: Smallpox had made it to Boston and was spreading rapidly. The first victims, passengers on a ship from the Caribbean, were shut up in a house identified only by a red flag that read "God have mercy on this house." Meanwhile, hundreds of residents of the bustling colonial town had started to flee for their lives, terrified of what might happen if they exposed themselves to the frequently deadly disease.

They had reason to fear. The virus was extremely contagious, spreading like wildfire in large epidemics. Smallpox patients experienced fever, fatigue and a crusty rash that could leave disfiguring scars and caused death in up to 30 percent of the cases.

In 1706, an enslaved West African man was purchased for the prominent Puritan minister Cotton Mather by his congregation. Mather gave him the name Onesimus, after a Biblical slave whose name meant "useful." Mather, who had been a powerful figure in the Salem Witch Trials, believed that slave owners had a duty to convert slaves to Christianity and educate them. But like other white men of his era, he also looked down on what he called the "Devilish rites" of Africans and worried that enslaved people might openly rebel.

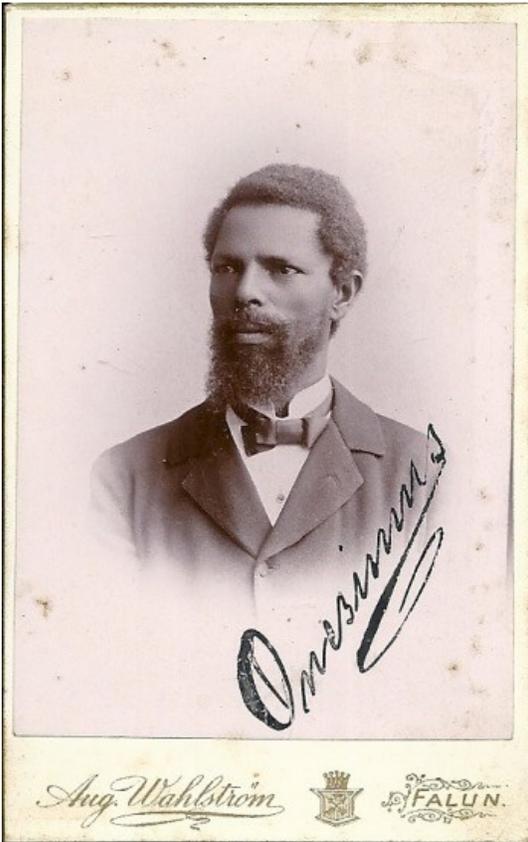
Mather didn't trust Onesimus: He wrote about having to watch him carefully due to what he thought was "thievish" behavior, and recorded in his diary that he was "wicked" and "useless." But in 1716, Onesimus told him something he did believe: That he knew how to prevent smallpox.

Onesimus, who "is a pretty intelligent fellow," Mather wrote, told him he had had smallpox—and then hadn't. Onesimus said that he "had undergone an operation, which had given him something of the smallpox and would forever preserve him from it...and whoever had the courage to use it was forever free of the fear of contagion."

The operation Onesimus referred to consisted of rubbing pus from an infected person into an open wound on the arm. Once the infected material was introduced into the body, the person who underwent the procedure was inoculated against smallpox. It wasn't a vaccination, which involves exposure to a less dangerous virus to provoke immunity. But it did activate the recipient's immune response and protected against the disease most of the time.

Onesimus told Mather about the centuries old tradition of inoculation practiced in Africa. By extracting the material from an infected person and scratching it into the skin of an uninfected person, you could deliberately introduce smallpox to the healthy individual making them immune. Considered extremely dangerous at the time, Cotton Mather convinced Dr. Zabdiel Boylston to experiment with the procedure when a smallpox epidemic hit Boston in 1721 and over 240 people were inoculated. Opposed politically, religiously and medically in the United States and abroad, public reaction to the experiment put Mather and Boylston's lives in danger despite records indicating that only 2% of patients requesting inoculation died compared to the 15% of people not inoculated who contracted smallpox.

This article was submitted by Kitty Johnson, Director of Human Resources at Tadiso, in recognition of Black History Month. Kitty is a member of Tadiso's Cultural Competency Committee.



# A Mini-Series on COVID 19 and Sleep— continued from January

## from the Allegheny County DHS Think Tank

Individuals who have difficulty achieving the right amount of sleep may experience:

- Increased likelihood of depression
- Increased risk of heart disease and stroke
- Increased risk of weight gain and obesity
- Increased risk of prediabetes in healthy adults
- Reduced social skills



### How to promote a good sleep experience

#### Exercise

**Exercise Daily.** Research about physical activity and sleep suggests that consistent, daily physical activity is a good predictor of longer and deeper sleep. Easy or moderate daily exercise is effective if it gives your muscles some resistance and provides a challenge. Reserve the mornings for strenuous exercise because it can interfere with the onset of sleep.

#### Timing

**Maintain Sleep-Wake Cycles.** Training your body to adhere to a sleep-wake cycle, even on weekends, can lead to more consistent sleep patterns. Set up a sleep schedule that works for you and stick to it. Choose a sleep time that matches when you feel drowsy, so you don't toss and turn. Set an alarm for your wake time, allowing for about seven hours of sleep.

**Limit Napping.** Another strategy to ensure the appropriate duration of sleep is to limit napping. To avoid "sleeping in," take a short nap on exceptional days when your nighttime sleep schedule absolutely needs to change. Limit other naps to 15 to 20 minutes and well ahead of your scheduled bedtime.

#### Nutrition

**Watch What and When You Eat or Drink.** Limit your intake of nicotine and caffeine, especially before bedtime, as they both cause the body to kick into high gear. Similarly, reduce your intake of sugary, high carb or refined carb foods throughout the day as they can wake you up at night. Avoid foods that cause stomach or intestinal upset in the evening and avoid drinking liquids less than an hour before bedtime. Finally, refrain from drinking alcohol as a sleep aid; its relaxing effects wear off after about two hours.

#### Environment

**Create a Dark, Quiet Sleep Space.** Sleep masks and heavy curtains or shades are low-risk, non-chemical alternatives to more conventional sleep aids, and can trick your brain into believing that it is time for sleep. If street noise interrupts your ability to fall and stay asleep, try earplugs or white noise to counter it.

**Limit Screen Time.** Our brains are particularly vulnerable to the blue light from cell phones and laptops. Remove electronics from your sleep space and turn off notifications so you won't be tempted to check your phone when you plan to sleep. Further, keep your sleep space just your sleep space. Watching shows and working in your sleep space confuses your body. Resolve to do both away from the room where you sleep.

**Be Mindful of Temperature.** Try keeping your sleep space slightly cool. Most people find around 65 degrees, with some ventilation, makes an ideal sleep condition.

**Quiet Your Mind.** If you are having difficulty sleeping because of ideas that keep running through your mind, try keeping a notepad at your bedside. Jot down ideas that you want to remember in the morning so they are there for you when you start your day. Another strategy is to recall all the ways life is good to push aside thoughts of the challenges that are still ahead.

#### Relaxation

**Learn to Relax.** Melatonin, the hormone of sleep, is naturally produced in the body when muscles relax, so, being able to relax is an important step when trying to fall asleep. A consistent relaxation routine shortly before bed, such as certain forms of yoga, can achieve two goals simultaneously: muscle use and relaxation techniques. Practicing meditation and mindful breathing can also encourage relaxation. The important thing is to get your muscles to relax, from your forehead to your toes.

**Consider Your Bed Coverings.** Weighted blankets, down comforters or other coverings can provide a sense of safety and well-being. Their calming effect can help you relax into sleep. Make sure the room temperature is matched to your covering, so you are not awakened because you are too warm.

#### The bottom line

High quality, consistent sleep – along with proper nutrition and daily exercise – are the pillars of good health. Making changes to achieve a good night's sleep is worth the effort and will help you achieve optimal health.