

Good Sleep Hygiene

There are many steps that you can take that may help you overcome insomnia and get a good night's sleep. Some of these strategies are easily incorporated into your lifestyle and others may take time adjusting to.

Personal Habits:

- **Go to sleep and wake at the same time daily including weekends.** The body “gets used” to falling asleep and waking at a certain time, but only if this is a relatively fixed time.
- **Avoid napping during the day.** If napping is a necessity to your lifestyle limit your nap to 30-45 minutes as long as you can sleep well at night.
- **Avoid activities in bed.** Such activities include watching TV, eating, writing, reading and talking on the phone in bed. All of these activities are stimulating and can confuse the body when in bed. Reserve the bed for sleeping.
- **Avoid alcohol, caffeine and nicotine before bed.** Do not consume these products 4-6 hours before bedtime. Also avoid heavily spiced foods.
- **Avoid sleeping aids.** Do not depend on sleeping aids for more than 3 weeks. Speak with your doctor further if you have a dependency for these aids AND have changed your sleeping lifestyle.
- **Exercise.** Exercise daily but not before bedtime. Afternoon exercise can help deepen your sleep but not within 2 hours of your bedtime.

(over)

Your Sleeping Environment:

- **Make your bedroom quiet, dark and a little bit cool.** Your room should be cool (not cold) and keep your room well vented.
- **Use comfortable bedding.** Sleep on a firm mattress. Make sure that your bed is big enough for persons sleeping in it. Your pillow and sheets should be a comfort to you, and hassle free.
- **Eliminate distractions.** Close window blinds, shut doors, turn off lights, turn off radio and television and avoid washing and drying laundry if you can hear it.

Getting Ready For Bed:

- **Do not go to bed hungry.** However, do not eat a heavy meal before bedtime. Try a light snack before bed. Warm milk and foods high in the amino acid tryptophan, such as bananas, may help you sleep. Be sure to keep a regular schedule for eating, chores and other activities.
- **Begin rituals that help you relax each night before bed.** Try a warm bath, light snack, few minutes of reading or listening to light relaxing music. Yoga and deep breathing techniques may help relieve anxiety and reduce muscle tension.
- **Don't take your worries to bed.** Leave your concerns about job, school, daily life, etc. behind when you to bed. Some people find it useful to assign a “worry period” during the evening or late afternoon to deal with or problem solve these issues. Train your body and mind.
- **Get into your favorite sleeping position.** If you do not fall asleep within 15-20 minutes, get up, go into another room and use one of your bedtime/relaxing techniques until sleepy.

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