

HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS

What is insomnia? It is trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up early in the morning for more than 1 month. Every adult varies in sleep requirements to function well – anywhere from 4-5 hours to 9-10 hours/night; needs change and older adults may require less sleep.

What causes insomnia?

- Poor sleep habits
- Nicotine, caffeine, alcohol (especially when consumed within 4-6 hours of bedtime)
- Medications like diuretics and stimulants (including over-the-counter and natural herbs)
- Health conditions like pain, stress, anxiety, depression, restless legs, allergies, asthma, loud snoring

Do I need sleep medication? Always use healthy sleep habits - even if the doctor is treating what is causing the insomnia or prescribes sleep medication short term. Frequent use of sedatives/sleep aids can make you dependent on them.

What does it mean to be a good sleeper? Good sleepers usually fall asleep within 30 minutes of lying down but can still wake up 1-2 times/night. Even good sleepers have difficulty sleeping 1-2 nights now and then.

How can I have healthy sleep habits? Improve your lifestyle and habits to help you sleep, reduce stress, set realistic sleep goals.

BEDTIME ROUTINES AND HABITS

- Go to bed at the same time, even on weekends.
- Plan ahead! Finish busy work about an hour before bedtime. Ex. Finish laundry, pack lunch and briefcase, lay out next day's clothes.
- End the evening quietly without bright lights, heavy exercise, TV, phones, video games or computers.
- Follow the same soothing routine every night to transition to bedtime. Do things like take a warm bath, listen to gentle music/sound machine that can turn itself off.
- Teach yourself different ways to calm down and fall asleep. Try something simple like making time to get comfy then picture a pleasant, relaxing time...like a day at the beach. Learn meditation, deep breathing, or relaxation techniques.

QUIET, COMFORTABLE SLEEP-ONLY ZONE – BEDROOMS ARE FOR SLEEPING!

- Wear comfortable pajamas. Make that 'last trip' to the bathroom.
- Pay attention to noises around you that make it hard to sleep. Ex. A snoring bed partner or noise coming from a room nearby.
- Keep a cool, dark room with a cozy, inviting bed, blankets and, if needed, a night-light.
- Take distractions out of the room. Ex. No TV, computer, phone. Don't read in bed if it keeps you up.
- Reserve the bed for sleeping or intimacy.
- Go to bed only when sleepy. If you aren't asleep within 20-30 minutes of going to bed or after waking up during the night, get up and go elsewhere until you feel drowsy...keep lights low and do relaxing activities like reading, meditation, puzzles, or handcrafts.
- Don't watch the clock in bed at night.

DAYTIME ROUTINES AND HABITS

- Set an alarm and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends. Sometimes it's easier to get up at the same wake-up time than go to bed at the same bedtime.
- No naps during the day if it stops sleeping at night. If you must, limit naps to 30 minutes in the early afternoon.
- Choose healthy foods and eat meals at the same time every day. No caffeine (Ex. coffee, tea, soda, energy drinks, chocolate) after 12 noon. Don't eat heavy meals close to bedtime; but a light snack is ok when hungry.
- Plan exercise every day so you can go to bed sleepy. Exercise during the day and avoid heavy exercise within 2-3 hours of bedtime.
- Get plenty of bright light and sunshine during the day.
- Try other ways to relieve your everyday stress like stretching, yoga, tai chi, or massage.
- If you are a worrier, plan a time earlier in the day to work out how to tackle worries and concerns so it does not preoccupy your bedtime thoughts. Consider talking to a therapist or joining a support group if it is consuming your thoughts.

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