

INSOMNIA – HOW TO GET A GOOD NIGHT’S SLEEP

Some Ways to Improve your Sleep Habits



•Set up a bedtime routine. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even if it feels like you didn't sleep enough during the night. Do the same thing every night to help prepare your body for sleep. Try reading, taking a warm bath, or doing some other relaxing activity.

• Try to avoid “time in bed without sleeping.” Estimate how many hours you have actually been sleeping, and add 1 hour. Subtract this from the time you need to wake up; this will give you the time you need to go to bed. Example, if you sleep 5 hours and need to wake at 7 am, your “time in bed” is 6 hours, and you will need to go to bed from 1 am until 7 am. After the first two to four weeks, increase the “time in bed” by half an hour every 5 days. Your eventual goal is 6 to 8 hours per night. The sleep diary can help you keep track of this.

•Don't 'try' to fall asleep. The more you try, the more trouble you may have. If you tend to watch the clock, turn it away so you don't see the time.

•Use the bedroom only for sleeping and intimacy. Don't eat, talk on the phone or watch TV while you're in bed.

•Your bedroom should be dark, quiet and a comfortable temperature. If noise is a problem, use ear plugs. A fan can also mask the noise.

•If you're still awake after 30 minutes, get up and go to another room. Sit quietly for about 20 minutes before going back to bed. Do this as many times as you need to until you can fall asleep.

TIPS TO HELP YOU SLEEP

- Limit your use of caffeine (coffee, tea, colas, chocolate) and decongestants.
- Avoid smoking. Tobacco can disturb sleep.
- Avoid alcohol, especially late in the evening. It may help you fall asleep, but it can also make you wake up during the night.
- Regular exercise can help you fall asleep and sleep more soundly. But don't exercise just before going to bed.
- Set aside another time for worrying about things. For example, you could spend 30 minutes after dinner writing down what's worrying you and what you can do about it.
- Try eating a light snack before going to bed, but don't eat too much. A glass of warm milk or cheese and crackers may be all you need.
- Don't nap during the day.

Adapted from: (1) handout developed by the College of Family Physicians of Canada; (2) the American Academy of Family Physicians <http://www.aafp.org/afp/20070815/517.html>; (3) Clinical Practice Guideline Adult Primary Insomnia. Alberta TOP program 2007 available at http://www.topalbertadoctors.org/NR/rdonlyres/13BAEFD0-7451-4A7E-A20B-4BE33133F9A9/0/insomnia_management_guideline.pdf

