

Overcoming Sleep Problems

Establish a Bedtime Routine

- Relax in the hour before going to bed. Reading, taking a warm bath, listening to music, relaxation tapes, yoga, etc. all can assist falling asleep.
- Try eating a light snack before going to bed.
- Drink a small to moderate amount of fluid in the evening.
- Climb into your bed for sleep at the same time every night.
- If you cannot fall asleep after 20 minutes or so, get up out of bed and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy. Then return to bed.
- Have a regular wake up time, with little variation on weekends, no matter how well you slept the night before.

Things to Avoid

- Don't drink caffeine for 6 hours before bedtime.
- Don't consume alcohol before bedtime. Interestingly, alcohol may make you drowsy, but it often leads to poor quality of sleep and nighttime awakening.
- Avoid napping, especially naps that last longer than 15 minutes or naps that take place within 6 hours of bedtime.
- Don't use your bed for eating, reading, watching television, or completing work. Teach your body to associate sleep with your bed.
- Avoid looking at your clock when you can't sleep; place it out of sight.
- Don't eat heavy meals within 4 hours of bedtime.
- Avoid computer and cell phone screens for 30 minutes before bedtime.

Other Tips

- Exercise daily for at least 30 minutes. (But don't exercise within 2 hours of bedtime.)
- Keep your room cool and dark.
- Wear comfortable night clothing.
- Choose a comfortable mattress, pillow, sheets, and blankets.
- Add some soothing "white noise" such as a fan or a sound machine, or use earplugs.
- Move your cell phone to another room at bedtime.
- Sleep is one of the few things that can only be attained without effort. So don't *try* to fall asleep; instead just letting yourself naturally fall asleep.
- Talk to your physician about using Melatonin.

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