

Sleep Hygiene

The most common cause of insomnia is a change in your daily routine. For example, traveling, change in work hours, disruption of other behaviors (eating, exercise, leisure, etc.), and relationship conflicts can all cause sleep problems. Paying attention to good sleep hygiene is the most important thing you can do to maintain good sleep.

Do:

1. Go to bed at the same time each day AND get up from bed at the same time each day.
2. Get regular exercise each day, preferably in the morning. There is good evidence that regular exercise improves restful sleep. This includes stretching and aerobic exercise.
3. Get regular exposure to outdoor or bright lights, especially in the late afternoon.
4. Keep the temperature in your bedroom comfortable.
5. Keep the bedroom quiet when sleeping.
6. Keep the bedroom dark enough to facilitate sleep.
7. Use your bed only for sleep
8. Take medications as directed. If prescribed sleeping pills, take 1 hour before bedtime, or 10 hours before getting up, to avoid daytime drowsiness.
9. Try to relax just before going to sleep: Muscle relaxation, imagery, massage, warm bath, etc.
10. Keep your feet and hands warm. Wear warm socks and/or mittens or gloves to bed.

Don't:

1. Exercise just before going to bed.
2. Engage in stimulating activity just before bed, such as playing a competitive game, watching an exciting program on television or movie, or having an emotional discussion with someone
3. Have caffeine in the evening (coffee, many teas, chocolate, sodas, etc.) .
4. Read or watch television in bed.
5. Go to bed too hungry or too full.
6. Take another person's sleeping pills.
7. Take over-the-counter sleeping pills, without your doctor's knowledge. Tolerance can develop rapidly with these medications.
8. Take daytime naps.
9. Command yourself to go to sleep. This only makes your mind and body more alert. If you lie in bed awake for more than 20-30 minutes, get up, go to a different room (or different part of the bedroom), participate in a quiet activity (e.g. non-excitable reading or television), and then return to bed when you feel sleepy. Do this as many times during the night as needed.

