

Tips for Better Sleep

Disturbance for sleep (insomnia) is very common. One out of three persons will experience insomnia during his/her lifetime. Insomnia seems to be more prevalent in females (especially after menopause) and in the elderly. Sleep-aids are the most commonly taken over the counter and prescription medications. Long-term use of these medications can cause problems. Here are some tips to help you sleep better without the use of medications.

Develop Self-Discipline:

- People require from five to nine hours of sleep to feel fresh. Sleep only as much as needed to feel refreshed the following day
- Restricting time in bed solidifies sleep, and excessively long times in bed lead to fragmented and shallow sleep.
- Get up at the same time each day, seven days a week. Regular wake-up times lead to regular sleep-onset time

Practice Moderation:

- A steady, daily program of exercise in the morning or afternoon deepens sleep.
- Both hunger and excessive fullness can disturb sleep. A light snack at bedtime may help sleep.
- Avoid excessive liquids in the evening in order to minimize the need for nighttime trips to the bathroom
- Avoid caffeinated beverages (coffee, tea, colas) in the evening
- The chronic use of tobacco disturbs sleep
- Avoid alcohol, especially in the evening. Although alcohol helps people fall asleep more easily, their sleep is fragmented by alcohol.

Be Comfortable:

- Insulate your room against sound and light
- Choose a comfortable mattress and pillow
- Keep your room temperature moderate. Excessively warm or cold temperatures can disturb sleep.
- If you find yourself looking at the clock at night, turn it so that you cannot see, or cover it up.

Don't Try Harder to Fall Asleep:

- Start a relaxing bedtime routine.
- Go to bed only when you are sleepy.
- If you find yourself unable to fall asleep, get up and go into another room. Stay up as long as you wish, preferably engaged in a boring activity. Go back to bed only when you

feel sleepy. If you are in bed for more than about 10 minutes without falling asleep, you should get out of bed.

- Do not use your bed for anything except sleep and sexual activity. Do not read, watch television, eat, or worry in bed.
- Do not take naps during the day, naps will interfere with you ability to fall asleep at night
- Use sleeping pills only as a last resort

Nearly everyone has occasional sleepless nights, however, if you have trouble sleeping on a regular or frequent basis, see you doctor. You could have a sleep disorder, such as obstructive sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome. Identifying and treating the cause of your sleep disturbance can help get you back on the road to a good night's sleep.