

# 5 Tips to Better Sleep

## 1. Bedtime Rituals: there are a number of sleep rituals which will contribute to better sleep



- Going to sleep and waking up at the same time every day (yes, even weekends!) trains your body's sleep cycle. Sleeping late disrupts your sleep cycle and often leads to you feeling worse.
- Count sheep (or an equally repetitive activity). If you do not fall asleep within 30 minutes, get up and do something boring in dim lighting. Staying in bed only increases anxiety and makes it harder to fall asleep. Try listening to peaceful music or reading a book.
- Avoid bright lights and stimulating activities close to bedtime. Yes, this includes TV!
- Temperature is an important factor to sleeping well, so keep your bedroom a little cooler. Although a warm bath or shower may be soothing, allow your body to cool down before bed.
- Reclaim your bedroom. Your bedroom should not be used for watching TV or being on the computer. Even having a clock in your room can create anxiety. If you need an alarm, turn the clock to face the wall.

## 2. Eating Right and Exercise: overall health has a big impact on our sleep



- Stop eating at least 2-3 hours before bedtime. However, do not go to bed hungry! If you need a small snack, ensure it is not fatty or spicy.



- Small dinner meals will help reduce the chance of heartburn.
- Restrict evening fluids to reduce night-time bathroom visits. Though herbal tea can be a soothing bedtime ritual, ensure you drink it at least one hour before lights out.
- Regular exercise will help you sleep, but make sure to do so by late afternoon. Evening exercise can actually reduce the likelihood of falling asleep easily due to increased alertness and body temperature.

## 3. Naps: reconsider your daily nap as the solution to your sleep difficulties



- Decreasing daytime sleepiness by napping may actually increase problems.
- If you need to nap, keep it short (less than 30 minutes) and before 3:00 PM.



## 4. Caffeine, Nicotine, and Alcohol: the impact on sleep can be surprising



- Caffeine is a stimulant which stays in your body for up to five hours.
- Caffeine not only makes falling asleep difficult, but it affects the quality of your sleep as well.
- Avoid all types of caffeine for six to eight hours before bed including: coffee, tea, cola, and chocolate.



- Keep in mind some medications, such as aspirin, acetaminophen and other anti-inflammatory drugs, may contain caffeine. Do not stop or adjust your medication schedule without consulting your physician.
- Nicotine is another stimulant which has the same effect as caffeine.
- Nicotine additives are known to cause nightmares.
- Due to the addictive quality of nicotine, people often experience withdrawal during the night which causes them to wake up.
- Alcohol makes you drowsy, however, it disrupts sleep quality and causes frequent waking.
- Alcohol also causes muscle relaxation which causes or worsens snoring, which not only affects your sleep quality but also that of your bed partner!

## 5. Sleep medications: help or hindrance?



- Many over the counter sleep aids will help you fall asleep, but they come with the price of side effects including daytime drowsiness.
- Please consult a physician before using any over-the-counter medications due to possible interactions.

Sleep issues may indicate a more serious problem such as Sleep Apnea. Pre-screening will allow you to assess your risk and follow-up with your physician.

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