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Healthy Sleep Habits

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.
2. Get up from bed at the same time each day.
3. 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.
4. Get regular exposure to outdoor or bright lights, especially in the late afternoon.
5. Keep the temperature in your bedroom comfortable.
6. Keep the bedroom quiet when sleeping.
7. Keep the bedroom dark enough to facilitate sleep.
8. Use your bed only for sleep and sex.
9. Take medications as directed. It is helpful to take prescribed sleeping pills 1 hour before bedtime, so they are causing drowsiness when you lie down, or 10 hours before getting up, to avoid daytime drowsiness.
10. Use a relaxation exercise just before going to sleep.
 - o Muscle relaxation, imagery, massage, warm bath, etc.
11. 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 important discussion with a loved one.
3. Have caffeine in the evening (coffee, many teas, chocolate, sodas, etc.) .
4. Read or watch television in bed.
5. Use alcohol to help you sleep.
6. Go to bed too hungry or too full.
7. Take another person's sleeping pills.
8. Take over-the-counter sleeping pills, without your doctor's knowledge. Tolerance can develop rapidly with these medications. Diphenhydramine (an ingredient commonly found in over-the-counter sleep meds) can have serious side effects for elderly patients.
9. Take daytime naps.
10. Command yourself to go to sleep. This only makes your mind and body more alert.

Perpetuating Factors of Insomnia

(from Perlis, ML, Jinquist, C. Smith, MT, & Posner, D. (2005).
Cognitive behavioral treatment of insomnia: A session-by-session guide. New York: Springer.)

Extending Sleep Opportunity

Go to bed early	Deprimes "sleep homeostat" leading to insomnia and shallow sleep. Possible circadian dysregulation
sleep in (wake up later)	Deprimes "sleep homeostat." Possible circadian dysregulation
Napping	Deprimes "sleep homeostat"

Counter Fatigue Measures

Increased use or inappropriately timed use of stimulants	Sleep-interfering arousal
Avoid or decrease physical activity	May deprime "sleep homeostat." Can lead to conditioned arousal if increased time is spent in bed or bedroom

Rituals and Strategies

Increase in nonsleep behaviors to "kill time"	Promotes a lack of stimulus control
Sleep somewhere other than the bedroom	Promotes a lack of stimulus control
Engage in "rituals" which are thought to promote sleep	Promotes a dependence on the behaviors and (herbs, teas, etc.) anticipatory anxiety when not available
Avoidance of behaviors thought to inhibit sleep (e.g., sex, going outdoors near bedtime, etc.)	Promotes anticipatory anxiety when behaviors occur

Self-Medication Strategies

alcohol qhs	REM suppression and rebound sleep fragmentation. Early morning awakenings. Decreased sleep-related self-efficacy
Marijuana use	Effects on sleep are poorly understood. Discontinuation may exacerbate insomnia; Decreased sleep related self-efficacy
OTC sedatives (antihistamines)	Increased dependence on medication to sleep; Decreased sleep related self-efficacy; Morning hangover
Melatonin as a hypnotic	Circadian phase shifts: may promote insomnia; Increased dependence on substance to sleep; Decreased sleep related self-efficacy; May have a within or across night withdrawal; Lack of FDA regulation