

## Sleeping Well

Do you want to improve the quality of your sleep? The following list provides a number of habits that may improve your sleep quality. Work to achieve consistent improvement in your habits for three weeks. Consult your primary care physician regarding insomnia that lasts for more than one week or is significantly different from your normal sleep pattern.

- Keep consistent sleep times. Go to bed and awaken at the same times every day, including weekends, e.g., 10:00 PM - 6:00 AM. (Normal sleep duration is approximately 7 to 8 hours)
- Exercise! Exercise in the morning if you are trying to fall asleep earlier.
- Limit your activities in the bedroom to sleep and sex. No television, no reading, no work, no computer, no arguments. Do those in another room.
- Practice relaxation exercises in bed as part of your preparation to go to sleep.
- If you are not sleeping for more than 20 minutes, get up and do something that will distract you. Find a calming activity in low light in another room until you are sleepy again.
- Light spectrum does affect sleep. Blue and white light (computer screens and phones) disrupt sleep onset.
- Create a bedtime ritual that starts 30 minutes to 1 hour before you go to bed. This is your "wind down time". Avoid increased emotional, physical, or mental activity after 9 PM, e.g., at 9 pm get in your pajamas, read a book, drink warm milk or herbal tea.
- Limit your caffeine intake after 12 PM, i.e., no chocolate, caffeinated tea, coffee, or caffeinated soda.
- Do not drink alcohol for 2-3 hours before you go to bed.
- Keep your room clean and tidy. The room should also be very dark and quiet while you are sleeping. You can try "noise machines" i.e., stream, rain, or ocean sounds to help limit outside disruptions.
- Keep the temperature in your room consistent (65-68 degrees) and comfortable for you. Invest in bedding and pillows that are comfortable. Use pillows for support of your neck, arms, and legs as needed if you suffer from pain symptoms.
- You may try eating a light snack before bed that contains a carbohydrate and a protein, i.e., milk, cheese & cracker. Avoid simple sugars in the evening hours, particularly before bedtime.
- Do not get up to smoke during your normal sleeping hours and never smoke in bed.
- If you awaken frequently due to an urge to urinate, regulate your liquid intake several hours before bed so that you do not need to awaken in the middle of the night.
- Turn your clock around if you watch it in the middle of the night. Set the alarm so you know that you will not oversleep.
- Do not take naps during the day or go back to bed in the morning if you are having difficulty with sleep at night.
- If you snore loudly or gasp for air at night, speak with your doctor.
- Use positive messages about sleep to help you sleep. Replace negative thoughts with positive and rational messages.