

PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

INSOMNIA

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TIPS FOR A BETTER NIGHT'S SLEEP

Insomnia is a common condition when you have difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep and poor quality of sleep. It interferes with normal daily activities. Symptoms can include problems with attention, concentration or memory, poor performance at school or work, changes in mood, daytime sleepiness, and lack of energy or motivation. It has been linked to car accidents and errors at work including industrial disasters. People with insomnia are also more likely to suffer from other problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, depression and obesity. It can decrease enjoyment of life and can cause work to suffer. The amount of sleep we need is different for all people and changes as we age. The NIH suggests school aged kids need at least 10 hours of sleep, teens about 9-10 hours and adults from 7-8 hours per night. Sleep hygiene is the adoption of good sleep habits every night to improve how you sleep. Healthy sleep habits (good sleep hygiene) can greatly improve people's enjoyment of life and daily functioning.

STRATEGIES FOR BETTER SLEEP:

- Keep a regular sleep schedule by going to sleep and waking up at the same time every day, even on weekends.
- Develop a relaxing bedtime routine away from bright lights. Avoid watching television, phone or computer screens in the bedroom and right before bed. Bright lights and screens lead to excitement, stress or anxiety and make it more difficult to fall asleep.
- Keep your bedroom cool and comfortable, between 60-67 degrees and keep your bedroom free from any noise, distractions or excess lights that can disturb your sleep.
- Daily exercise has been shown to help people sleep better at night, preferably for at least 20 minutes per day more than 4-5 hours before bedtime.
- Avoid afternoon naps, even short ones because they disturb the normal sleep-wake cycle.
- Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, heavy meals and drinks with caffeine later in the day and before bed. Avoid eating large meals at least 2-3 hours before bedtime and avoid spicy meals that may cause upset stomach during the night.
- Make sure your mattress and pillows are comfortable and supportive. Most mattresses last about 9-10 years before you should replace it.
- Spend the last hour before bed doing a calming activity such as reading, taking a warm bath or meditating. If you find you cannot sleep when you lie down, go into another room and do something relaxing until you feel tired. Keep work materials, computers and televisions out of the sleeping area.

TREATMENT

If you continue to have trouble sleeping despite healthy sleep hygiene habits, speak with your family doctor. They may recommend recording your sleep habits in a sleep diary to help evaluate common patterns or issues with your sleep hygiene. Your doctor may look for and treat an underlying problem causing your sleep disturbance.

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SOURCE(S): National Sleep Foundation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and American Academy of Sleep Medicine

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