

Insomnia

For most people, falling asleep and staying asleep are parts of a natural process. Good sleepers are likely to have developed certain lifestyle and dietary habits that promote sound sleep. These habits or behaviors are known as **sleep hygiene**.

Stimulus control management:

1. Try to sleep only when you are drowsy.
2. If you are unable to fall asleep or stay asleep, leave your bedroom and engage in a quiet activity elsewhere. Do not permit yourself to fall asleep outside the bedroom. Return to bed when – and only when – you are sleepy. Repeat this process as often as necessary throughout the night.
3. Maintain a regular arise time, even on days off work and on weekends.
4. Use your bedroom only for sleep and sex.
5. Avoid napping during the day. If daytime sleepiness becomes overwhelming, limit naptime to a single nap of less than 1 hour, no later than 3pm.

Sleep hygiene:

1. Avoid caffeine and alcohol within 4-6 hours of bedtime.
2. Avoid the use of nicotine close to bedtime or during the night.
3. While a light snack before bedtime (milk or dairy products are good – but keep it light!) can help promote sound sleep, avoid large meals. A small bowl of Cheerios is a good example.
4. Avoid strenuous exercise within 6 hours of bedtime. Regular exercise, however, can be beneficial for sleep. Try to exercise in the morning or afternoon.
5. Minimize light, noise, and extremes in temperature in the bedroom.

Managing Stress:

Stress can often contribute to sleep problems. A relaxing activity around bedtime can help relieve tension and encourage sleep. Consciously attempting to clarify problems and formulate solutions can have a positive effect on sleep quality.

Designate “Worry Time”:

Another technique that can be helpful is to designate a particular time for worry. Set aside 30 minutes in the evening to sit alone, undisturbed. Write down each of your worries (one per 3x5 index card) as it comes to mind. These worries can range from the mundane to the serious. When all worries have been written down, sort the cards according to the priority of the worry. Look at each and formulate a possible solution; even small progress in remedying a worry can yield helpful results. The morning after recording your worries review the worry cards and begin

to work on resolving the worries you've identified.

Good sleep hygiene will improve the sleep of many people. Review what we have talked about and let's see if things aren't better with your sleep within 4-6 weeks. If problems persist, please contact me for more help.

Sincerely,
Rocky Kane, MD