

Sleep is an essential part of feeling well and feeling happy, but almost everyone experiences problems sleeping at some time of their life.

Sleep disruption is common, especially during times when you may feel emotionally overwhelmed. Anxiety, relentless replaying of the day's events, and heightened emotions may significantly interfere with your sleep. Lack of sleep robs you of needed rest, making management of your illness more difficult.

Bringing sleep patterns under control is important - you need your rest. However, it often takes some time to get problematic sleep under control and rarely can this be done overnight!

The most common cause of insomnia is a change in your daily routine or stress. For example travelling, exams, work stress, change in work hours, disruption caused by eating, exercise, or leisure, relationship conflicts, etc. may all cause problems.

Paying attention to good sleep hygiene is the most important thing you can do to maintain good sleep.

Do:

- ✓ Go to bed at the **same time** each day
- ✓ Get up from bed at the **same time** each day
- ✓ Get **regular exercise** each day, preferably in the morning  
(There is good evidence regular exercise improves restful sleep)
- ✓ Get regular **exposure to outdoor or bright lights**, especially in the late afternoon
- ✓ Keep the **temperature** in your bedroom comfortable
- ✓ Keep the bedroom **dark** enough to facilitate sleep
- ✓ Keep the bedroom **quiet** – try thicker curtains, sleeping at the back of your house or even ear plugs to avoid being woken by noise
- ✓ Use your bed only for **sleep and sex**
- ✓ Use a **relaxation** exercise just before going to sleep or a relaxation tape
- ✓ Try muscle relaxation to help distress and unwind, e.g. a **warm bath** or a massage
- ✓ Keep your feet and hands **warm**. Wear warm socks and/or mittens or gloves to bed

Don't:

- × Exercise just **before going to bed**
- × Engage in stimulating activity just before bed, such as **playing computer games**, watching an exciting program on television or movie, or having an **important discussion** with a loved one
- × Have **caffeine** in the evening (coffee, teas, chocolate, etc.)
- × Have **alcohol** in the evening or use alcohol to sleep  
(it may make you drowsy but it doesn't improve sleep and you will wake to go to the toilet)
- × **Smoke** before going to bed – nicotine is a stimulant and will keep you awake
- × Read or watch **television** in bed
- × Go to bed **too hungry** or **too full**
- × Take another person's sleeping pills
- × Never take **daytime naps** or **doze off** in front of the TV in the evening – keep yourself awake with something stimulating or your risk resetting your body clock
- × **Command** yourself to go to sleep. This only makes your mind and body more alert
- × If you lie in bed awake for more than 20-30 minutes, **get up**, go to a different room (or different part of the bedroom), participate in a quiet activity (e.g. non-excitabile reading or television), then return to bed when you feel sleepy. Do this as many times during the night as needed

If needed, you may try over the counter sleep remedies, such as Nytol, but these are no substitute for addressing the problems that cause poor sleep. Sleeping tablets do not address these issues either and are not suitable for most people.