

Getting Some Shuteye



Sound Sleep Strategies

Why Sleep Matters

Establishing regular sleep habits will not only keep you healthy, but can also improve learning and memory.

During sleep, connections between brain cells are strengthened and memories are consolidated.

Adequate sleep also helps maintain healthy body weight through regulation of hormones and metabolism.

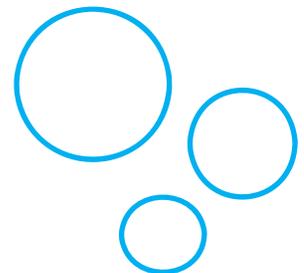




Maintain a Routine Sleep Schedule

to keep your biological clock synchronized...

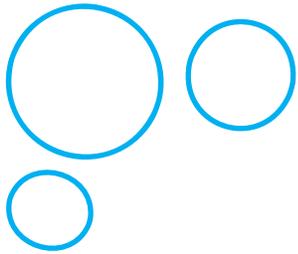
- Go to bed and get up at the same time every day as much as possible
- Aim for 8 to 9 hours of sleep a night
- Even if you stay up late, try to get up at your regularly scheduled time
- Avoid naps if you are experiencing insomnia



ZZZZ

The Right Sleep Environment

- Aim for a dark, quiet environment
- Close the curtains and eliminate other light. If light still intrudes, try an eye mask
- If you can't get rid of outside noise, use ear plugs. You can also run a fan or humidifier to provide a white noise background and cover up external sounds
- Find the right humidity for your comfort level
- Keep the temperature in your bedroom on the cool side. Add blankets as needed for warmth.
- Use your bed only for sleep or sex. Watching T.V., studying, and reading should be done somewhere else. That way, your bed is associated primarily with sleep



Behavioral Strategies

to regulate your circadian rhythms...

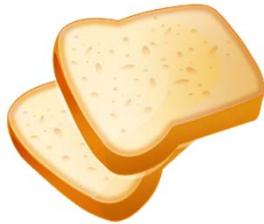
- Exercise between morning and dinner hours to elevate your body temperature during the day. If you have problems sleeping, exercise at least 4 hours before bedtime.
- Get outside into natural sunlight, especially in the morning hours. Use a full spectrum light in the morning if you can't get outside.
- Go to bed at the right time in your sleep cycle.
- We cycle through five stages of sleep, ranging from light sleep to deep sleep to REM sleep over a period of about two hours. If you are having difficulty getting to sleep, you may just need to wait 30 minutes for your biorhythm to cycle back to sleep onset.



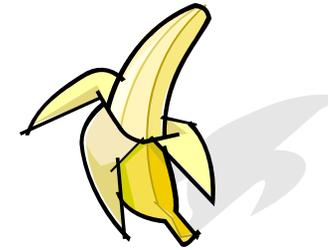


to calm your mind and body...

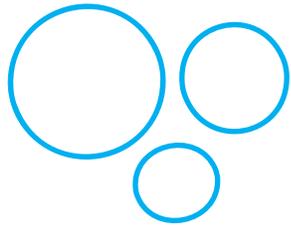
- Engage in a relaxing activity before bed.
- Avoid blue-toned light at night, which includes television and computer monitors. Blue light stimulates the reticular activating system, sending the body a signal that it is daytime.
- Train yourself to use a relaxation strategy to get to sleep. Over time, your body will learn to associate the mental imagery with sleep.



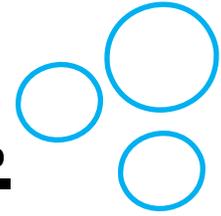
Diet and Drugs



- Try a light carbohydrate snack (whole grains or starchy vegetables) or foods with the amino acid tryptophan (milk, turkey, bananas, dates, or figs) about an hour before bedtime.
- Avoid spicy or high-sugar foods and food containing tyramine, such as cheese, spinach, sauerkraut, processed meats (ham, bacon, sausage), tomatoes, potatoes, eggplant, bell peppers, red wine and beer. Don't eat a large meal before bedtime.
- **Eliminate caffeine four to six hours before bedtime.** This includes coffee and green or black tea. Make sure over-the-counter medications (esp. those for menstrual cramps, headaches, or allergies) don't contain caffeine.
- Avoid alcohol. Alcohol might induce sleep initially, but then it tends to disrupt sleep and cause night-time wakefulness, particularly during the second phase of the sleep cycle.
- Don't smoke before bed. Nicotine is linked to difficulty falling asleep and waking up.
- Consult with your doctor when combining medications and herbal supplements. If you think your prescription medication is keeping you awake, ask if you can take it at a different time of day. Check with your doctor if you are considering medication as a sleep aid—some medications can make the insomnia worse when you quit taking it. Most sleep medications are for short-term use only and become less effective over time.



When you can't sleep...



- If you can't sleep after twenty minutes, get up out of bed and engage in a quiet activity in a dimly-lit room. Read a boring book until you are sleepy. Remember, we want the bed associated with sleep and not insomnia.
- Avoid clock-watching. Turn on your alarm but face the clock away so that you don't spend the night monitoring how long it is taking you to get to sleep.
- Seek help for anxiety, stress, or depression which might be triggering sleep problems.
- Even though sleep deprivation can result temporarily in fatigue, irritability, decreased concentration, and emotionality, your insomnia won't last forever. After a few sleepless nights, exhaustion usually over-rides your brain. If your sleep problems persist even after trying these strategies, consult your doctor.
- If you have gotten through a restless night and are still awake after 5 a.m., it may be best to get up for good and trust your natural sleep regulator to correct itself the following evening at your normal bed-time.
- Be patient. Fear of insomnia can be self-fulfilling. Almost everyone experiences occasional sleep problems as a normal response to stress. Trust your body to lead you back into a solid night's sleep.

Concerned about Sleep?

Contact Tufts' Counseling and Mental Health Services

Office Hours

Monday - Friday, 9:00am - 5:00pm

Make an Appointment

Call us at 617-627-3360

Visit us Online

<http://ase.tufts.edu/counseling>