



PROGRAM FOR IMPROVED SLEEP

Information provided courtesy of Kelowna Sleep Clinic – Dr. Ronald Cridland Inc.

To become a good sleeper, you need to follow **ALL the highlighted recommendations**. Put this in a place where you can refer to it every night until you are not forgetting any of it.

1. **Maintain a regular bedtime and wake time.** This is to help your biological rhythm. Unless you can make naps a regular part of your day, try to avoid them. The exception to this is when you become sleepy while driving. In this situation you are impaired and it is important that you pull over where it is safe to do so and have a nap.
2. **No thinking in bed!** If you have a habit of thinking in bed, **set aside some “worry time”** in the evening to think about all the things that need thinking about. Then write it down, make a list or put a note on a calendar. Do whatever it takes **to give yourself permission to be “off duty”** for the rest of the night.
3. **One to two hours before bed, slow down and disengage from the day’s activities.** This is to allow your “adrenalin” to wear off. You may start with a hot bath to slightly raise your body temperature. Then do something relaxing until bedtime. Even though some people may fall asleep watching TV, it is best to avoid TV and computer before bed. They can be neurologically stimulating and the bright light can delay the onset of your natural Melatonin.
4. One hour before bed, have a light carbohydrate snack along with Calcium 500 mg and Magnesium 250 mg. These are approximate dosages obtained at the health food store.
5. **At bedtime, do a relaxation technique** in bed, lights out, eyes closed, with permission to fall asleep while you are doing it. **If you wake during the night, remember you are off duty. Your only job is to repeat the relaxation technique and return to sleep.**
6. **The bedroom should be dark, quiet and comfortably cool. Use only for sleep or sexual activity. Do not look at the clock during the night. Set the alarm so you know when to get up and turn the clock away so you cannot see it. The alarm is important!** It enables you to sleep deeper by taking away the responsibility of deciding when you are going to get up. Remember, no thinking in bed, even about time.
7. **If you have not fallen asleep or wake and cannot return to sleep within 20 - 30 minutes (just estimate), get up,** go to another room and do something relaxing, not exposing yourself to bright light. Return to bed when you start to feel sleepy and repeat the relaxation technique. You do not want to stay in bed awake for long periods of time reinforcing the bed as a place to be awake.
8. For those who have a habit of staying up late and sleeping in, you may need to reset your biological clock with morning bright light. Starting within one hour of awakening in the morning, try to get 30 - 45 minutes of direct sunlight (ideally outside, no sunglasses) or use a “light box”.
9. Eat regular meals and a good diet. Avoid heavy meals within 4 hours of bedtime.
10. Exercise every day. Exercising in the late afternoon or early evening helps your sleep even more by raising your evening body temperature. However, regular exercise anytime is helpful as long as it is not within 2 – 4 hours of bedtime.
11. Nicotine is a stimulant. If you smoke, ideally you should stop smoking, or at least **do not smoke before bed or during the night. Avoid caffeine** or at least drink no more than 2 cups of coffee per day, none later than noon. Have no more than 2 drinks of alcohol on any one day and **do not drink alcohol within 3 hours of bedtime.**
12. **If you are having difficulty consolidating your sleep, try going to bed an hour or two later for a few weeks.** Once your sleep is consolidated, gradually advance your bedtime routine 30 minutes per week until getting enough sleep to feel fully rested all day.