

10 TIPS for BETTER SLEEP

1 Go to bed at the right time



Set a bedtime, and don't get into bed before it. This may be later than you currently go to bed if you are already spending a lot of time in bed. You should stay up past your set bedtime if you are not feeling sleepy.



2 The 20 minute rule



Often people with insomnia notice that their mind begins to race when they turn off the light. You can stop this by leaving your bed when you don't fall asleep (or fall back to sleep) after 20 minutes of lying in bed. Plan ahead to do a relaxing activity when you leave the bed. Return to bed when sleepy. Repeat after 20 minutes, as needed.



3 Get out of bed each morning at the same time (or earlier)



If you can, sleep until it is your planned time to rise and start your day. Don't sleep or stay in bed past your rise time, regardless of how late you were up the night before.



4 Nap wisely



Don't nap if you don't need to. Avoid napping by getting active (ex. 20-minute walk). When a nap can't be avoided, limit yourself to a 10-20 minute power nap. Finish your nap before 3 pm.



5 Spend less time in bed



This may sound odd at first, but most people with insomnia spend a lot of time in bed trying to sleep. This creates sleep anxiety and makes it harder to sleep. Shortening your time in bed temporarily can lead to the unexpected benefit of giving you a better sleep with fewer interruptions. Gradually extend your time in bed as things improve.



6 Distract your mind



It is hard to fall asleep when your mind is active – worrying about finances, health, relationships, or tomorrow's to-do list. Give your mind a chance to slow down and let sleep take over. Try these distraction techniques to help you fall asleep:

- *Grocery cart exercise*: using your imagination, slowly walk through a grocery store and fill your cart, paying attention to each item you select.
- *Word list challenge*: think of a 5-letter word and come up with 5-10 words that start with each letter of the word. Add variety by choosing a theme – animals, names, cities, etc.



7 Take time to relax



Before getting into bed, there are many ways to prepare your body and mind for sleep. Add a relaxation technique to your bedtime routine that lets you do this. Examples include: low light reading before getting into bed, the 4-7-8 breathing exercise, and toe-to-head progressive muscle tightening and relaxing.



8 Make being in bed about being asleep



Use your bed only for sleep, sex, & sickness if you are not sleeping well. Stop reading, writing, socializing, working, or snuggling with pets in bed. Any type of screen is to be avoided.



9 Bust your sleep myths



Many people worry that they aren't getting enough sleep, and this keeps them up at night. What are your sleep myths? Busting them might be a part of what helps you get your sleep back.



10 Healthy sleep habits start during the day



Having an active body & mind during the day are important for your mental, physical, and sleep health. This starts with bright light in the morning. Can you add more light right after waking up and more daytime activities that energize your body and mind?



Control



Sleep Drive



Relax



Thoughts



Hygiene

These 10 tips come from the 5 components of cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia (CBTi), which is the #1 recommended treatment for insomnia. To learn more, visit mysleepwell.ca.

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