

Sleep Handout



Reasons we may have difficulty falling asleep

1. Stress/Cortisol
2. Too much caffeine
3. Restless legs syndrome – muscle pain and twitching when lying down to bed
4. Hormonal changes – during day 24-28 of menstrual cycle there are more sleep disturbances
 - Menopause – body temperature does not “dip down” like it should, and so there are more difficulties with falling and staying sleep

Reasons we may have difficulty staying asleep

1. Sleep breathing problems – snoring, sleep apnea
2. Hormonal changes – estrogen is protective of the airway – so decreased estrogen can lead to sleep apnea
3. Movement disorders
4. Hypoglycemia – eat a protein snack before bed and making sure that the majority of your calories are eaten before 4pm and do not eat dinner after 6-7 pm
5. Nocturia- try to drink most of your daily water before 5 pm
6. Alcohol consumption – effects quality of sleep
7. Stress/Cortisol

Sleep Hygiene

- Your bed should only be used for sleeping and sex. Do not read in your bed, do not work on the computer in your bed, and do not watch TV in your bed.
- Melatonin – is the hormone that tells our body to go to sleep, and it is highest 2 hours after we go to sleep. Full spectrum lights will disrupt the effect of melatonin more than the yellow colored (incandescent) lights.
- Your sleep environment should be completely dark, as if you are sleeping in a cave.
- Keep your bedroom around 60 degrees – we sleep better in cooler temperatures, and our body’s temperature naturally decreases at night.
- Keep you bed away from fuse boxes, electrical cords, and do not have anything plugged in beside your bed.
- No pets in your room and keep your room as hypoallergenic as possible – histamine promotes wakefulness
- Go to bed at the SAME time every night, and wake up at the SAME time every morning – even weekends
- Try to eat your last full meal before 7 pm or at least 3 hours before you want to be sleeping.
- Avoid caffeine and nicotine for at least 6-8 hours before you plan on going to bed.

Wind-Down Routine:

- Start your wind-down at least 1 hour before bed, and then go to bed – Otherwise, you will wind-down from the day while lying in bed, and this leads to insomnia.
- Your Wind-down needs to be in low-lights and NOT task oriented. Don’t work on something that needs to be done, instead; read, do a puzzle, knit, stretch. Do NOT watch TV, work on the computer, or clean the house.

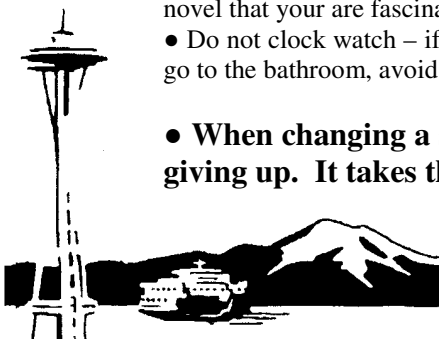
Active Skills to fall asleep:

1. Visualizations or story telling – make up a story in your head
2. Gratitude prayer or spiritual practice
3. Breathing practices
4. Meditation – but don’t listen to tapes, when they stop, your environment changes and you will wake up

Unable to fall asleep after 20 minutes:

- If unable to fall asleep or back to sleep within 20 minutes, get out of bed, and read something boring – not a novel that your are fascinated in, but something that you care nothing about. Only do this in dim lighting.
- Do not clock watch – if you wake up in the middle of the night; do NOT look at the time. Even if you get up to go to the bathroom, avoid looking at the clock.

- **When changing a sleep behavior or sleep pattern – be sure to try it for 7-10 days, before giving up. It takes this long for your body to learn changes.**



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