

## TIPS FOR GOOD SLEEP



- Avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, soft drinks, chocolate) and nicotine (cigarettes, tobacco products) close to bedtime.
- Drink less fluids before going to sleep.
- Avoid alcohol as it can lead to disrupted sleep.
- Exercise regularly, but complete your workout at least 3 hours before bedtime.
- Establish a regular relaxing, not alerting, bedtime routine (e.g. taking a bath or relaxing in a hot tub).
- Create a sleep-conducive environment that is dark, quiet and preferably cool and comfortable.
- Stay away from big meals at night. Try to make dinnertime earlier in the evening, and avoid heavy, rich foods within two hours of bed. Fatty foods take a lot of work for your stomach to digest and may keep you up. Also be cautious when it comes to spicy or acidic foods in the evening, as they can cause stomach trouble and heartburn.
- Turn off your television and computer. Many people use the television to fall asleep or relax at the end of the day, and this is a mistake. Not only does the light suppress melatonin production, but television can actually stimulate the mind, rather than relaxing it. Try listening to music or audio books instead, or practicing relaxation exercises. If your favorite TV show is on late at night, record it for viewing earlier in the day.

### **Reclaiming Your Bed for Sleep**

- Use your bed only for sleep and sex.
- Only get into bed when you're tired.
- If you don't fall asleep within 15 minutes, get out of bed. When you're sleepy, go back to bed.
- While in bed, don't dwell on not sleeping or your anxiety will increase.
- Think relaxing thoughts: picture yourself soothed in a tub of hot water, or drifting to sleep, each muscle relaxed.

### **Increase light exposure during the day**

- Spend more time outside during daylight.
- Let as much light into your home/workspace as possible. Keep curtains and blinds open during the day.
- If necessary, use a light therapy box. A light therapy box can simulate sunshine and can be especially useful during short winter days when there's limited daylight.

### **When you wake up in the night**

It's normal to wake briefly during the night. In fact, a good sleeper won't even remember it. But if you're waking up during the night and having trouble falling back asleep, the following tips may help.

- **Stay out of your head.** The key to getting back to sleep is continuing to cue your body for sleep, so remain in bed in a relaxed position. Hard as it may be, try not to stress over the fact that you're awake or your inability to fall asleep again, because that very stress and anxiety encourages your body to stay awake. A good way to stay out of your head is to focus on the feelings and sensations in your body.
- **Make relaxation your goal, not sleep.** If you find it hard to fall back asleep, try a relaxation technique such as visualization, deep breathing, or meditation, which can be done without even getting out of bed. Remind yourself that although they're not a replacement for sleep, rest and relaxation still help rejuvenate your body.
- **Do a quiet, non-stimulating activity.** If you've been awake for more than 15 minutes, try getting out of bed and doing a quiet, non-stimulating activity, such as reading a book. Keep the lights dim so as not to cue your body clock that it's time to wake up. Also avoid screens of any kind—computers, TV, cell phones, iPads—as the type of light they emit is stimulating to the brain. A light snack or herbal tea might help relax you, but be careful not to eat so much that your body begins to expect a meal at that time of the day.
- **Postpone worrying and brainstorming.** If you wake during the night feeling anxious about something, make a brief note of it on paper and postpone worrying about it until the next day when you are fresh and it will be easier to resolve. Similarly, if a brainstorm or great idea is keeping you awake, make a note of it on paper and fall back to sleep knowing you'll be much more productive and creative after a good night's rest.