



MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTRE MANITOBA

Tips for Wellness | Sleep

Most people have had some firsthand experience with of lack of sleep and the accompanying next day's irritability, loss of focus and emotional depletion. There are many reasons for not getting needed restful sleep.

Interrupted sleep patterns such as trouble falling asleep, staying asleep or waking up too early are common and frustrating. The most typical reasons for loss of sleep are related to stress, medical problems, hormonal changes, medications, an environment that makes sleep difficult, or various lifestyle factors.

Sleep is important to both physical and mental wellbeing because it gives our bodies time to replenish, to heal and to build a strong immune system to fight infections. A lack of adequate sleep can have negative impact on the ability to function well, handle the pressures of life, and get along with other people.

Frequent loss of quality sleep can lead to physical illness, high levels of anxiety and even depression.

Symptoms of Poor Sleep May Include the Following:

- Irritability, short temper
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor coping ability
- Low energy
- Tiredness during the day
- Poor decision-making
- Decreased productivity
- Overwhelmed by small challenges



Here are Some Suggestions for Increasing Your Ability to go to Sleep and Get a Full Night's Rest:

- maintaining a regular sleep-wake schedule
- avoiding caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, and other chemicals that interfere with sleep
- making your bedroom a comfortable sleep environment
- establishing a calming pre-sleep routine
- going to sleep when you're truly tired
- not watching the clock at night
- using light to your advantage by exposing yourself to light during the day and limiting light exposure in the evening
- not napping too close to your regular bedtime
- eating and drinking enough – but not too much or too soon before bedtime
- exercising regularly – but not too soon before bedtime

Sleep and Relaxation:

If we find we are unable to relax enough to get to sleep we may need to explore underlying concerns such as our tendency to worry, over think problems, or the degree to which we carry tension and stress in our bodies. If we go to bed with many thoughts still circling through our minds, it will be difficult for our bodies to fall into a restful state. Learning some relaxation skills, which help to unwind mentally and physically, will also assist in getting to sleep and in staying asleep. The gentle breathing instructions below and the progressive body relaxation are effective for both.

Gentle Breathing:

- In a quiet place, sit or lie down in a comfortable position. It may help to close your eyes.
- Breathe slowly in and out for about five minutes. As you inhale, breathe down into your belly. Focus on your breath.
- If you'd like, repeat to yourself, "Breathing in I am calm, breathing out I am coping."



Progressive Muscle Relaxation:

mherc.mb.ca

- In a quiet place, sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Take a few gentle breaths, in and out.
- Begin tensing groups of muscles one at a time as you breathe. Hold the tension as you inhale, then release it as you exhale. Take a few breaths as you notice (and enjoy) how relaxed each muscle group feels.
- Start with the muscles in your head, neck and face. Move down to your shoulders, hands and arms, back, stomach, buttocks, thighs, calves and feet.
- Repeat for any areas that are still tense.

If you have tried these ideas and are still having problems with sleep after a week or two, see your doctor, who will be able to check if your medications are affecting you, and refer to what other help is available.

Links

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/sleepless-nights-try-stress-relief-techniques>

<http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/need-sleep/what-can-you-do/good-sleep-habits>

Resources at MHERC

SINK INTO SLEEP: A STEP-BY-STEP WORKBOOK FOR REVERSING INSOMNIA

Judith R. Davidson, PhD, 2013

THE INSOMNIA WORKBOOK: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO GETTING THE SLEEP YOU NEED | Stephanie A. Silberman, 2008

SLEEPING SOUNDLY: ENHANCING YOUR ABILITY TO SLEEP WELL USING HYPNOSIS [video recording] | Michael D. Yapko, PhD

