



INSOMNIA BUSTERS

Impact of Insomnia

Individuals suffering from insomnia report lack of energy, irritability, poor performance at work, memory difficulties and concentration problems. Insomnia can compromise the immune system. There is some evidence to suggest that the stress response found in insomniacs is a risk factor for heart disease and diabetes. Psychological conditions such as depression or anxiety have been shown to commonly occur with insomnia. It is not always clear which is the trigger and which is the outcome, but treating insomnia effectively reduces these health risks.

Keep a Sleep Diary

A sleep diary can be a helpful way to keep track of your sleeplessness. Although a sleep diary is not a cure in itself, awareness of your sleep patterns can help you discover the cause of your insomnia. The details can be important, and a sleep diary might reveal that your pre-bedtime behavior is thwarting your chance for a good night's sleep.

- Time you went to bed and woke up
- Total sleep hours
- Quality of sleep
- Times that you were awake during the night and what you did (e.g. stayed in bed with eyes closed or got up, had a glass of milk and meditated)
- Amount of caffeine you consumed and times of consumption
- Types of food and drink and times of consumption
- Feelings - happiness, sadness, stress, anxiety
- Drugs or medications taken, amounts taken and times of consumption

Relaxation and Sleep

When practiced during the day, relaxation counters daily stress responses. This reduces the likelihood that stress hormones will be elevated at night. When practiced at bedtime or after waking in the middle of the night, relaxation helps turn off negative sleep thoughts, quiet the mind, and relax the body.

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- Go to bed and wake up the same time every day, as much as possible, even on weekends. Consider the Lord's counsel "...retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated." (D&C 88:124).
- If you are a night person who naturally falls asleep after midnight, take the over-the-counter supplement Melatonin 3-4 hours before you plan to go to sleep and turn on bright lights in the morning to help reset your sleep clock. (Ancoli-Israel, S., *All I Want is a Good Night's Sleep*)
- Begin to slow down and reduce your physical and mental activity about 1/2 hour before your usual bedtime. Do things which are restful or even monotonous.
- Relax your body before your usual bedtime like soaking in a warm (not hot) tub or massaging sore muscles.
- Reducing core body temperature increases sleepiness. Warming up your periphery by taking a warm bath or wearing socks to bed can help reduce core temperature. (Ancoli-Israel)
- Put your alarm clock out-of-sight. Watching the clock is counterproductive to getting to sleep. (Ancoli-Israel)
- Do not deliberately try to fall asleep. Listen to your body and let it be in charge of that process
- Use a sleep inducing relaxation technique when in bed.
- If you do not fall asleep in 10-15 minutes, get up and do something restful which requires minimal mental and physical energy. Go back to bed when your body gets sleepy. Repeat this procedure until you fall asleep..
- Get out of bed in the morning once you wake up. Avoid lying in bed in the half-awake state.
- Find something to look forward to getting up for each morning.
- Avoid napping during the day. Instead refresh yourself by doing a 15-20 minute relaxation exercise.
- Do not use your bed for reading, eating, studying, or resting. Lie on your bed only when you are ready to sleep
- Do not panic if your usual sleep pattern is interrupted. Trust your body to handle the situation.
- Avoid discussing disturbing topics or watching disturbing news late in the evening.
- Prepare ahead for the next morning by gathering together all of the things you will need before going to bed
- Keep a pencil and paper by your bed to write down ideas or tasks you want to remember.
- Increase your physical activity/exercise during the day. Avoid strenuous exercise in the evening
- Avoid late night munchies.
- Reduce the caffeine in your diet.
- If you wake up during the night use a relaxation technique to help you get back to sleep

Some ideas were adapted from How to Relax - A Holistic Approach to Stress Management by J. Curtis and R. Detert

