

Questions and Answers about Treatment Recommendations

Do I have to get up at the same time every day?

- Yes. The best way to set your body clock is to stick to your fixed rise time every day no matter how much sleep you actually get on a given night. A changing schedule, particularly if you get up at different times each morning, can make your sleep problem worse. Getting up at different times each morning can create the type of sleep problem that occurs in jetlag.
- Using an alarm clock to wake you is a good idea.
- It is very important to get out of bed within five to ten minutes after your alarm rings.

Don't do things that you do when you are awake, in the bed or bedroom

- While in bed, you should not do things that you do when you are awake (such as reading, watching TV, eating, studying, using the phone, or doing other activities in bed during the day). By doing these things you actually train yourself to stay awake in bed. Sexual activity is the only exception to this rule. **The most important thing to avoid is “trying to sleep” because it blocks you from getting the sleep that you want.**

What should I do if I can't sleep?

- If you are unable to sleep, stop trying to sleep. Get out of bed and do something that is pleasant but does not make you feel too awake.
- Long periods of being awake in bed often lead to tossing and turning, becoming frustrated and worrying about not sleeping. Tossing and turning, becoming frustrated and worrying about not sleeping, make it harder to fall asleep. The longer you lie in bed awake trying to sleep, wanting and hoping to go back to sleep, the more you will be awake in bed.
- If you find yourself awake for 15 to 20 minutes or so and you do not feel as though you are about to go to sleep, you should leave the bed and, if possible, leave the bedroom.
- Try not to use a clock to decide when to get out of bed because looking at the clock can lead to worrying about not sleeping, which will make it harder to fall asleep. Do not dwell on this decision. If it is obvious to you that you will not immediately fall asleep, get up.
- *What if I never feel sleepy?* Getting out of bed when you can't sleep, will teach you the difference between feeling sleepy and feeling tired and eventually you will feel sleepy. Going to bed when you are truly sleepy makes it more likely you will fall asleep quickly.
- *What do I do when I am out of bed?* Sleep naturally happens when you are calm and content. So the activities you choose to do when you get out of bed should make you feel calm and content.
- If you only follow this rule sometimes (and other times you do not follow the rule), this can undo the benefits of this recommendation.
- The most important thing you can do to improve your sleep is to STOP trying harder.

What do I do when I can't shut off my thinking

- Thinking about small and big worries, thinking about one's problems, or planning future events while in bed can make you feel tense or irritated and this will hurt your sleep. If you can't seem to shut off your thoughts, get up and go to another room.

Stay there until you feel sleepy again. If you continue to have trouble shutting off your thoughts, you may find it helpful to set aside time each day to do the thinking, worrying, problem-solving, and planning you need to do. Then, if intrusive thoughts occur during your sleep period, put them off to the “thinking and worrying time” on the next day. The time you set aside for this should not be close to bed time and the place where you do this activity should not be your bedroom.

- During the time you set aside you can write, make lists or decide what step you can take to deal with a problem.

Try not to nap

- Sleeping for any time other than your scheduled time lessens the quality of your nighttime sleep. **However, if you find yourself very sleepy** (not just tired, but actually sleepy) **and you are doing something for which you need to be alert** such as driving or using machines, take a short (15 to 30 minutes) nap to make sure you are safe.

Do I have to go to bed at the same time every night?

- Your ideal bedtime is set by your fixed rise time and the fixed number of hours you can be in bed that we decided upon earlier.
- However, it is important that you consider this recommended bedtime as your **earliest** time that you can go to bed. **Do not go to bed before you are sleepy. Sleep cannot be forced.**
- If you do not feel sleepy at your set time, wait until you do feel sleepy. When you are very sleepy it is as if you have to almost struggle to stay awake. When you feel like this, you are sleepy.

The “buffer zone”

- The “buffer zone” is a quiet time prior to bed time. During the buffer zone time, you should do things that are enjoyable on their own.