

HealthBreak

MAY 2013

Better Sleep



It's so frustrating! You know you need to sleep, but it's just not happening. Lying in bed, your mind races. You toss. You turn. You toss again. You begin to hate that alarm clock more with every passing minute. It'll be morning soon. Tomorrow's going to be awful.

Sound familiar? You're not alone. Luckily, sleep scientists have devised several suggestions for improving your quality of sleep. Think about incorporating them into your routine.

1. Make your bedroom quiet, dark and a little bit cool (think of a cave...a sleep cave).
2. Get plenty of exercise, but not within three hours of bedtime.
3. Avoid taking naps during the day. If you must nap, limit it to no more than 30 minutes. Never nap after 3 p.m.
4. Avoid caffeine after lunch.
5. Stick to a sleep schedule. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day. This includes weekends, days off and holidays.
6. If you are not asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed. Then calmly go to another room and do something relaxing (or even boring). When you start to feel sleepy, go back to bed and try again. Repeat if necessary.
7. Of course it's frustrating, but don't get angry. Anger and frustration are very stimulating emotions, and stimulation is the enemy of sleep. Getting worked up about it will only make it worse.
8. Don't go to bed hungry or overstuffed. Both can cause discomfort and disrupt your sleep.
9. Avoid alcohol. While having a "nightcap" can make you feel sleepy at first, it disrupts your sleep for most of the night.
10. Only use the bedroom for sleeping and intimacy.

Remember, everyone has trouble sleeping from time to time. If your sleep problems persist, see your doctor to rule out any underlying causes that might need treatment.