

Non-pharmaceutical ways to help with sleep

CONSCIOUSLY RELAX

Meditation, progressive relaxation or listening to a relaxation tape 20 minutes before bedtime can quiet the mind and relax the body. *Meditation is equivalent to the light sleep stage.

HERBAL TEA

One hour before bed, drink warm milk with nutmeg; chamomile tea or other herbal teas with valerian root in them.

MOVE YOUR BODY

Within your abilities, in the daytime, do gentle stretches or go for a slow walk to get your blood flowing.

REFRAME YOUR THOUGHTS

Negative thinking about sleep creates stressful physical responses in your body. Reframe these into positive thoughts.

EARLY TO BED

Deepak Chopra (1994) says that it is easier to fall asleep before 10:00 PM due to our body's natural biorhythms of the day.

DIET

Do not eat 3 hours before sleeping as your stomach is still digesting. Eating foods that are heavy, warm and moist may promote sleep.

TURN OFF THE DAY

Do not look at a clock or watch after 8:00 PM. Turn your answering machine or phone ringer to low. Have a routine of calming activities before bed: a bath, inspiring books, writing...

TURN OFF THE NEWS

Watching the nightly news can overstimulate your nervous system, leaving you with more thoughts and stress.

CREATE A QUIET, DARK BEDROOM

Reduce noise by wearing earplugs or get a "white noise" machine with nature sounds to block out unpleasant sounds. It is best not to be exposed to bright light before bed - you can buy a comfortable eye mask to block out light.

If you do awaken, have a reading lamp beside your bed so you don't have to get out of bed to turn off the light. Also, keep a pen and paper beside your bed, so that you can write down things that cause you to wake up in the night.

Adapted from:

Jacobs, Gregg. 1998. *Say Goodnight to Insomnia*. New York: Henry Holt.
Zeff, Ted. 2004. *The Highly Sensitive Person's Survival Guide*. Oakland: New Harbinger publications.

The 5 Stages of Sleep:

There are about 4 cycles of 90 minutes each night where we experience all four stages and REM sleep. Most of the deep sleep happens near the beginning of the night and REM sleep happens more before you wake up in the morning.

Stage 1 is the transition between wakefulness and sleep and is similar to a deep state of relaxation, since the "theta" brain wave pattern emerges in this state.

Stage 2 is light sleep that is the first stage of "real sleep". We spend about half of the night in this stage.

Stage 3 & 4 are deep sleep where the "delta" brain-wave patterns emerge. The deep sleep stages are the most important since this is when our bodies are at their deepest rest, with blood pressure and heart rate at their lowest. This is also the time when our immune system turns on and is "recharged".

Stage 5 is dream sleep and characterized by REM (Rapid Eye Movement), which is a lighter state of sleep resembling wakefulness.

Things that can disrupt sleep patterns	Things that can support sleep rhythms
<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Caffeine (coffee, tea, soda pops such as colas, chocolate & some medications)o Alcohol (awakenings in the night)o Tobacco (Nicotine is a stimulant)o Sleeping pillso Hungero Vigorous exercise before bedtimeo A room that is too hot or too coldo Background noiseo Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Regular daytime exerciseo Relaxing Activities before bedtimeo A dark, quiet roomo "White" noise (soft music or the hum of a fan)o Regular sleeping patternso Regular eating habits with good nutritiono Write down plans for tomorrow on papero Keep paper by your bedside to write down items that cause you to awaken.

*From *Sleep Difficulties*, Pam Del Maestro.