



FROM
YOUR DOCTOR



How to get a good night's sleep

There's no miracle cure for insomnia. But if you follow your doctor's advice—and these dos and don'ts—you should be sleeping better soon.

What to do

- ★ Practice good sleep habits. Get up at the same time each morning, and go to bed at the same time each night. If you need to make changes in your schedule to improve sleep, adjust your *bedtime* forward or backward, *not* your wake-up time.
- ★ Get regular exercise at least 5-6 hours before going to bed. Mornings or afternoons are the best times to exercise.
- ★ Eat meals at regular times, and don't eat much in the evening before bedtime. If you need a snack, keep it light. Avoid heavy, spicy foods and large amounts of liquid in the evening.
- ★ Reduce caffeine, limit alcohol, and eliminate or cut down on nicotine.
- ★ Make your bedroom comfortable for sleeping. Avoid extreme heat or cold. Keep noise and light to a minimum. Make sure your mattress is comfortable.
- ★ Set aside a few minutes each evening to jot down your immediate problems and what you plan to do about them. Use this "worry time" to let go of problems; don't bring them to bed.
- ★ Wind down before going to sleep. Spend the 30 minutes before bedtime doing something that relaxes you. Take a warm (not hot) bath, listen to music, or meditate.
- ★ Reserve your bedroom for sleep and sex. When you get into bed, turn off the lights and try to get to sleep.

What not to do

- ★ Don't take naps during the day.
- ★ Don't watch the news or any violent or exciting TV shows late in the evening if they distress you.
- ★ Don't go to bed before you are sleepy. (Remember, you must get up at the same time each day.)
- ★ Don't lie awake in bed for a long time. If you can't fall asleep in 30 minutes, get up and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy.
- ★ Don't watch TV, eat, argue, or read in bed.
- ★ Don't watch the clock. Set an alarm if you need to, but put it out of sight.
- ★ Don't use alcohol as a bedtime sedative.
- ★ Don't take sleeping pills unless prescribed by your doctor. And get your doctor's advice on nonprescription sleeping aids. □