

SETTING THE STAGE FOR A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

1. Establish a regular sleep routine: try to retire at about the same time, and awaken at the same time, every day, even on your days off.

2. Create a restful sleep environment:

- room should be dark, quiet, and comfortably cool
- supportive mattress and pillow(s)
- limit activities in bed to sex and sleep
- don't take work materials to bed

3. Be realistic about how much sleep you need. Most adults require 6-8 hours of sleep a night. Don't cheat during the week, and play catch-up on the weekend!

4. Avoid stimulants 3-4 hours before bedtime. These include coffee, black or green tea, cola, chocolate, "energy" bars, spicy food, and some cold/allergy medicines.

5. Avoid consuming alcohol 3-4 hours before bedtime: leads to interrupted sleep.

6. Light exercise in the evening (a brief walk, yoga, stretching) can help release accumulated tension in the body; however, aerobic or intense exercise is not recommended 3-4 hours before bedtime.

7. Aids to restful sleep:

- herbal tea (valerian, chamomile)
- light snack of tryptophan-containing foods (milk, bananas, turkey)
- warm bath, dim lights, soft music, gentle massage
- deep breathing, prayer, meditation

8. Inhibitors to restful sleep:

- arguing with your partner or children
- worrying about finances or meeting deadlines
- watching the news on TV
- bright lighting (overhead, or from computer screen)

9. Avoid routine use of sleep medications; however, if you are sleep-deprived, taking a non-narcotic prescribed sleep medication for a few nights may help.

10. If you still can't sleep, don't toss and turn for hours. Get out of bed, but keep the lights dim, and try one of the aids to restful sleep (#7) in another room. When you begin to feel sleepy, go back to bed, plump up the pillows, and try again.