



Taddle Creek
Family Health Team

Nov 10, 2021 – Pt. Webinar #2 – Recipe for Better Sleep – Sleep Rules & References

Sleep Hygiene:

1. Set a consistent wake up time and stick to it, irrespective of day of the week or how you slept. This will strengthen your circadian rhythm.
2. Light Exposure – get outside in the morning for 20-30 min for natural light exposure. Even on a cloudy day, the light energy is enough to strengthen circadian rhythm. Be mindful of artificial light exposure after sunset. 1-2 hours before bedtime, keep lights low but comfortable. Keep the bedroom dark.
3. Temperature – keep the bedroom cool, ideally between 15-19 degrees Celsius. A hot bath can help cool core body temperature and may improve sleep quality.
4. Substances – be mindful of time of use and amount and the impact on sleep. Nicotine, alcohol and caffeine all impact sleep quantity and/or quality in a negative manner.
5. Exercise – ensure movement and/or exercise is a part of your day. Moderate-vigorous exercise is connected to various health benefits, one being that it improves sleep quality.
6. Buffer Zone – create an enjoyable bed time routine and practice relaxation (30-60 min) prior to going to bed. With time, this routine can become a strong cue for “letting go” and sleeping.
7. Technology – keep technology out of the bedroom as much as you can. Be mindful of using smartphones, tablets, computers, etc. close to bedtime.
8. Eating/drinking – eating a meal too close to bed time is not advised, food and the act of digestion can signal wakefulness and impede circadian rhythm. Consider avoiding liquids at least 2 hours prior to bedtime if you are bothered by awakenings to use the bathroom.
9. Optimize your sleep environment – be mindful of indoor air quality, comfort of mattress, noise, etc.

Sleep Restriction Therapy:

These steps help improve sleep quality by restricting time spent awake in bed:

1. Keep a sleep diary for at least 14 days to assess average time in bed, time awake in bed, time asleep and sleep efficiency.
2. Set your rise time based on when you need to wake up for the day and work backwards to determine bedtime.
 - For example, if your average time asleep is 5.5 hours and you need to wake up at 7am, add 30 min to your time asleep to create your time in bed prescription. Rise time would be 7am, bed time would be 1am. Stick to the same rise time and do not go to bed before the prescribed bedtime, unless you are finding yourself very sleepy.
3. Maintain the new schedule for 14 more days and analyze sleep diary. If sleep efficiency percentage is consistently 85-90%, increase time in bed by another 30 min.
 - Example: Rise time remains 7am, bedtime changes to 12:30am.

4. Continue keeping a sleep diary and increase the time spent in bed by increments of 15-30 min. until you feel you are sleeping relatively well and are maintaining a sleep efficiency of 80-90%. Keep a sleep diary until you no longer have sleep problems. This process takes time, be patient with and kind to yourself.
5. No naps – reduces sleep drive and interferes with night time sleep.

Stimulus Control Therapy

These steps address conditioned arousal and help the bed become a trigger for sleep:

1. No wakeful activities in bed – no homework, worrying, planning, organizing, working, eating, reading, etc. The bed/bedroom is only for sleep and sex.
2. Get out of bed if you're unable to fall asleep within 20-30 min – break association with the bed as the place where you are “tired but wired” and not sleeping.
3. Go to bed only when sleepy – differentiate sleepy from tired/fatigued.

Cognitive Restructuring:

These steps attempt to change inaccurate and/or unhelpful thoughts and cognitions about sleep:

1. Journal re: stress and worries about your day. Find 20-30 minutes per day to “constructively worry”. Make a list of worries and identify solutions, come up with a plan to address each concern. Categorize worries as either “signals” or “noise”. Do this journaling during the day, not close to bedtime. If worries come up at night, remind yourself that you have a plan of action.
2. Consider which thoughts or beliefs about sleep and insomnia may be contributing to difficulties with sleep. Challenge unrealistic expectations about sleep and do not focus on consequences of sleep loss.
3. Use a CBT-Insomnia workbook to learn other cognitive restructuring tools, e.g.: Thought Records.

Relaxation Training:

These practices can help reduce physical tension in the body, decrease racing thoughts and help calm mind and body:

1. Breathing exercises that involve slow, deep breaths or longer exhales. Try the 4-7-8 breathing practice.
2. Progressive muscle relaxation is a technique involving purposeful tensing/flexing of muscles and then letting go of the tension. Sometimes combined with guided imagery and deep breathing.
3. Yoga Nidra or restorative stretching, combined with slow, deep breathing.
4. Autogenic training involving being guided to notice specific feelings in various parts of the body that connect to sensations of warmth, heaviness, relaxation, etc.

For more resources related to insomnia, please review the MHP- CBT-Insomnia Handout – 2021

References:

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