



Coping With Sleeping Problems

Many people have a problem getting to sleep. If you have stopped drinking, maybe you are finding it difficult to sleep. The first thing to remember is that it does not help to worry about it. You may feel irritable and tired as a result of not sleeping, but it is unlikely to cause any long term harm. If you should wake, instead of worrying DO something – read a book, maybe make a cup of weak tea or hot milk. Since our bodies go in 100 minute cycles, you will soon reach a more sleepy period. Sleep is an excellent self regulating system. You will sleep when the body knows it has to do so.

Tips that some people find helpful:

1. For a while train yourself to get into bed at the same time each evening and out of bed at the same time each morning – preferably reasonably early. The body has approximately a 24 hour clock. In the daytime the body temperature rises and at night-time it falls. This means that the body expects to sleep at regular times.
2. Use an alarm clock and get up as soon as it goes off. Regular rising means that you will fall asleep more easily. After a short while doing this you should feel better – but give yourself a chance.
3. Don't smoke or take drugs (unless your GP especially suggests aids to sleeping) including tea, coffee, cola immediately before going to bed. All of these release the hormone adrenalin, which increases your temperature and activity, and counteracts the effect of body building hormones which are released while we sleep. These body-building hormones repair the tissues we use and are essential to help us feel refreshed during the coming day.
4. Make sure that you take adequate physical exercise each day or during the early evening.
5. If you feel tired during the day a short cat nap can be helpful but don't allow yourself to sleep heavily or you will spoil the night's sleep. When trying to get back to a regular sleeping pattern it is best not to cat nap.
6. Watch TV or take up a hobby that will help you unwind before going to bed.
7. A warm drink before going to bed may help, but avoid tea and coffee unless it is very weak. Some people find it useful to take a flask and have it by their bedside so they can pour a hot drink if they wake in the night, although sometimes the activity of going to make a drink can be beneficial.
8. Try a warm bath before getting into bed.
9. Make sure your bed and pillows are comfortable.
10. Go to bed in a warm room. Contrary to what people say, it may sometimes be more helpful to close the window – especially in the winter.
11. Try using a hot-water bottle and wearing bed-socks.
12. By trial and error, find the most comfortable position for your body in the bed.
13. As soon as you are comfortable try to do some deep breathing. Breathe in deeply so that your stomach distends with air, and then let it out gently. Repeat this several times – it will help you to relax and clear your mind.
14. Try these tips and then *forget you have a sleep problem*. If you wake up, don't worry about it – the next night may be better.