Sleep Help

Some strategies for improving your quality of sleep:

• Reduce stress as much as possible. Feeling anxious or stressed can drastically effect your ability to fall asleep and stay asleep throughout the night.
• Exercise to stay fit. People who are fit are more able to rest comfortably at night and stay asleep once falling asleep.
• Keep mentally stimulated during the day. This will help to keep you awake during the day and ready you for sleep at night.
• Eat a balanced diet. Avoid fatty food and those that cause indigestion, especially later in the day.
• Stop smoking. Quitting can drastically improve your quality of sleep.
• Reduce caffeine intake. A small coffee after dinner could effect your ability to fall asleep, but more importantly, your ability to stay sleeping.
• Avoid alcohol near bedtime. Drinking alcohol can effect the quality of your sleep. Even if you sleep long enough after a night of drinking, you will probably still be tired due to the lack of sleep quality.
• Take a warm bath or try other relaxation techniques to wind down before heading to bed.
• Make your bedroom a sleep sanctuary. Keep the atmosphere peaceful and try to study in designated areas other than your bed.
• Establish a bedtime ritual. Whether it be stretching before getting into bed, or creating a bedtime playlist, develop a habit that signals your body that it's time to sleep.
• Clear your mind at bedtime. Try to avoid running through the events of the day right before or while laying in bed.
• Avoid trying too hard to get to sleep. Trying to force sleep can cause frustration, which makes sleeping more difficult. Stay relaxed and try some relaxation techniques [below] if you are having trouble.
• Limit your time in bed. If you can't fall asleep, get up and move around. Avoid getting into bed until you are ready for sleep.
• Learn to value sleep. Knowing the benefits of good sleep can help to stick to healthy habits.
• Use the Wellness Center Sleep Performance Sleep Log to keep track of how well you're sleeping.
• Establish a regular schedule - go to bed and get up at the same time every day. Depriving yourself of sleep during the week and compensating on the weekends is unhealthy.
• Avoid long daytime naps. The best time to take a nap is between 1:00-4:00 PM and the nap should be not longer than 15-30 minutes. Anything longer will affect your ability to get a quality night's sleep. Make up for lost sleep by going to bed early instead of sleeping in.
• Stop using your computer, I-phone, and TV (including video games) 1 hour before you go to sleep because light from the screens can interfere
with 5 hormones that tell your brain when it’s time to sleep.

**Bedtime relaxation techniques:**

If you are having troubles falling asleep, try some of these relaxation techniques while laying in bed. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR): Try tensing and then relaxing your muscles in groups, starting from your toes and slowly working up the body to your eye muscles and forehead. Squeeze tightly for five to ten seconds before moving upward to the next group.

**Yoga:**

Relax and inhale to the count of five, and raise your arms backward over your head until they touch the mattress. Make two fits and raise your buttocks. Tense and stretch every muscle, even your face. Then, arms still raised, let all the tension drain from your body.

**Light a candle:**

But only in your mind! Focus on the flame, and dismiss all thoughts that cause it to flicker. As it burns steadily, your mind becomes serene.

**Mental Imagery and Fantasies:**

Imagine yourself in a relaxing situation, such as lying on a tropical beach, strolling through fields, floating through the air, or listening to soft music. Feel the warmth of the sun and the gentle breezes, hear the lapping sounds of the surf, and inhale the fragrances.

**Deep Breathing:**

Take five deep breaths, and as you count each one, say to yourself, “I’m getting more relaxed, peaceful, and serene. I’m slowly falling asleep.” Concentrate only on this message.

**Mind Games:**

Imagine you’re writing six-foot-high numerals on a large blackboard. Start at one hundred and count backward. You probably won’t make it to fifty.

**Counting Sheep:**

The oldest trick in the book! But it really works! It distracts both sides of the brain with a soothing, repetitive activity; the right side sees the images, the left does the counting. You literally bore yourself to sleep.
Journal

Before you go to bed to help with ruminating or worries that cause you to fall asleep later. End your journal entry with uplifting thoughts, like things you are grateful for, or things you would like to dream about that night.

Get out of bed when

You do not fall asleep within 45 minutes and have tried the other relaxation techniques, then do something light, like reading, for 15-25 minutes and then try to go back to bed.