

SLEEPLESS IN INDIANA

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According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services 60 million Americans suffer from insomnia. Insomnia tends to increase with age and affects 40% of women and 30% of men. Even mild sleepiness can impair your work, school or sports performance. Lack of sleep may cause you to look tired and feel depressed, irritable and angry.

Follow the tips below to put you on the road to a night filled with sleep, instead of one filled with tossing and turning:

Maintain a regular bed and wake time schedule, even during weekends and vacations, keeping in mind most adults need 8 hours of sleep.

Do not pull all night “cram” session, as this drains your brainpower.

Upon awaking get into bright light as soon as possible, but avoid bright light in the evening.

Create a bedroom that is dark, quiet, comfortable and cool.

Exercise regularly, preferably in the late afternoon, but at least 3 hours before going to bed.

Get a new mattress at least every 10 years.

Avoid caffeine 6-8 hours before going to bed.

Eat at least 2-3 hours before going to bed.

Avoid nicotine too close to bedtime, as it may cause difficulty falling asleep, problems awaking in the morning and even nightmares.

Avoid alcohol too close to bedtime. Alcohol disrupts sleep and causes nighttime awakenings.

Keep work and school projects, computers and televisions out of the bedroom. Move your alarm clock from your sight, if it makes you anxious about how much time you have before morning.

If you have trouble sleeping when you go to bed, don't nap during the day, as it may affect your ability to sleep at night.

If you cannot go to sleep within 30 minutes of going to bed, don't stay in bed tossing and turning. Get up and involve yourself in a relaxing activity, such as listening to soothing music, soaking in a hot tub, or reading, until you feel sleepy. Try to clear your mind, do not use this time to solve your daily problems.

If you are having trouble sleeping keep a sleep diary for 1 - 2 weeks to assist in identifying the culprit that is robbing you of sleep. If you have the internet you can keep a free, online diary at <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/quiz/index.php?secid=&id=107>. If you do not have computer access your diary should include when you last had caffeine, alcohol or ate heavy meal, when you last exercised, any medications you are taking whether prescribed or over the counter, what activities you participated in one hour before going to bed.

Talk to your health care professional if you suffer frequent daytime sleepiness, have difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep at night often, and/or snore loudly every night, and take your sleep diary with you to the appointment.

Research for this article was obtained from the National Sleep Foundation. Their website can be viewed at www.sleepfoundation.org.