**Not Getting Enough Sleep? Feeling Tired When You Wake Up?**

Difficulties with sleep are common, and many people with persistent pain do not get enough sleep to feel rested. The good news is that you CAN get a better night’s rest by following scientifically-proven (evidence-based) guidelines listed below. It will be difficult at first, but most people notice a great improvement within a couple of months.

**Change Your Sleep Habits: Key Steps**

Spending a lot of time in bed awake, night after night, sometimes causes sleep problems because it confuses the brain. To sleep well, the brain needs to learn that the bed is a place for sleep. The steps below will help re-train your brain to sleep in bed.

1. **Use Your Bed or Bedroom for Sleep Only**

Only get in bed when it’s time to sleep. This teaches the brain that the bed is for sleep. (It’s ok to use the bed for sex, but nothing else.) Just as you may connect the kitchen with hunger, this guideline will help you connect sleep with your bedroom. Follow this rule both during the day and at night. **DO NOT** watch TV, listen to music, use your phone or computer, have arguments, eat or read in bed. You may have to temporarily move the TV or radio from your bedroom to help you improve your sleep cycle.

1. **Go to Bed Only When You Are Sleepy**

There is no reason to go to bed if you are not sleepy. Do not go to bed based on the time. Go to bed only when you are so tired you can barely keep your eyes open. At first you might stay up later than usual when you do this. Stick to your scheduled wakeup time **regardless** of the time you go to bed. After a week or so, you will start getting tired earlier in the night.

1. **Get Out of Bed if You Can’t Fall Asleep or Can’t Go Back to Sleep in 15 Minutes**

If you wake up during the night and you’ve tried falling back asleep for 15 minutes and can’t, get out of bed and do something very boring. This is important! Remember, you need to train your brain that the bed is **only** for sleep. If not sleeping, get out of bed, but don’t do anything that excites you or makes you tense. Instead, do something relaxing or boring.

1. **When you feel sleepy again, get back in bed**

When you feel tired again, get back in bed (don’t fall asleep anywhere else!). If you still aren’t sleeping after about 15 minutes, get up again. You might need to get in and out of bed a few times before falling asleep.

1. **Get out of bed at the same time each day**

No matter what time you fall asleep during the night, make sure to get up at about the same time each day (even on weekends). Sleeping one or two hours later is not normally a big problem but sleeping a lot later can cause problems.

1. **Do not nap during the day**

If you are very tired in the daytime, it’s ok to nap once for 30 minutes. But set a timer, or ask someone to wake you up, to make sure you don’t sleep longer.

*Note: This patient information is drawn from a variety of evidence-based sources. This handout is part of a research study and is being used in an enhanced treatment condition (PI: Kanzler, KE).*

**More Tips to Improve Your Sleep**

1. **NO CAFFEINE: No Caffeine 6-8 hours before bedtime**

It is a fact! Caffeine causes sleep problems, even for people who do not think they are bothered by caffeine. Caffeine is found in items such as coffee, tea, soda, chocolate, and many over-the-counter medications (e.g., Excedrin).

1. **AVOID NICOTINE: Avoid nicotine before bedtime**

Nicotine is a stimulant and does not help with relaxing. As nicotine builds in the system, it is a lot like caffeine. DO NOT smoke to get yourself back to sleep. If you would like to quit using tobacco products, please talk to your PCP.

1. **AVOID ALCOHOL: Avoid alcohol after dinner**

Alcohol often helps with falling asleep, but as alcohol is metabolized in the body, sleep becomes disturbed and broken up. Thus, a large amount of alcohol is a poor sleep aid and should not be used for sleep.

1. **NO SLEEPING PILLS: Sleep medications do not fix insomnia**

Sleep medications only work for about 2-4 weeks when taken regularly. Over time, sleeping pills actually make sleep problems worse. When sleeping pills have been used for a long time, when you try to stop the medication, you may end up with a “rebound effect.” Thus, after long-term use, many people think they “need” sleeping pills in order to sleep normally. Talk to your PCP about reducing your sleeping pill use.

1. **REGULAR EXERCISE: Aim for 30 minutes each day**

Exercise in the late afternoon or early evening can help improve sleep, although it may take several weeks to notice a difference. Do not exercise very close to bedtime (within two hours) because it may be hard for your body to relax and make falling asleep harder.

1. **BEDROOM ENVIRONMENT: Nice temperature, quiet, dark, and comfortable**

Rooms that are very hot or very cold can disturb sleep. Noises can be lessened with white noise (such as the noise of a fan) or with earplugs. Bedrooms may be darkened with black-out shades or sleep masks can be worn over your eyes. Place clocks and phones out-of-sight since clock-watching can lead to worry about not sleeping enough. If you can, try to have a mattress that is not too soft or too firm and use a comfortable pillow.

1. **EATING: Changing habits can be helpful**

You should avoid the following foods very close to bedtime: anything caffeinated like chocolate, peanuts, beans, most raw fruits and vegetable (they may cause gas), and high-fat foods such as potato chips or tortilla chips. Do not go to bed too hungry or too full. Avoid snacks in the middle of the night because waking up may become connected with the feeling of hunger. A light bedtime snack if you are hungry may help you sleep.

1. **UNWIND: Take time to relax**

Allow yourself at least 30 minutes before bedtime to wind down. The brain is not a light switch that you can instantly turn on and off. Most of us cannot expect to go full-speed until 10:00 PM then fall peacefully asleep at 10:30 PM. Take a bath, read a book, watch some TV, or have a pleasant talk with your partner or kids. This may also help your body let go of tension, which can worsen pain. Find what works for you and make it your routine before bed. Be sure not to struggle with a problem, get into an argument before bed or anything else that increases your body’s arousal (feelings of being awake).

1. **REGULAR SLEEP SCHEDULE: Consistency is key**

Set the alarm clock and get out of bed at the same time each morning, weekdays and weekends, no matter your bedtime or the amount of sleep you got the night before. You might want to stay in bed if you did not sleep well, but try hard to keep up your new schedule. It will take time, but you can get better sleep!