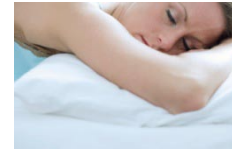


Tips for Better Sleep



Establish a bedtime routine. Relaxing rituals before bedtime can help you to reliably fall asleep. Listen to relaxing music, read something soothing for 15 minutes, have a cup of caffeine free tea, do relaxation exercises. Avoid over-stimulating activities such as scary entertainment, competitive games or intense work or study shortly before going to bed.

Make sure your bedroom is quiet and your bed is comfortable. Keep the room cool and dark. Avoid light reflected from the street or from computers, TV screens or other sources. Use room darkening shades or dark curtains. If the room is not quiet, consider using earplugs to block noise.

Get some light to set your body clock. Light tells your body clock to set to the daytime phase. When you get up in the morning, open the shades or go outside to get some sunlight.

Exercise earlier. Avoid late night workouts that rev you up when you need to be slowing down. And consider walking more. People who walk have been found to have fewer sleep problems.

Listen to guided imagery. Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of these CDs in helping us fall asleep. GHC students can obtain a relaxation CD at no charge from the Counseling Center or purchase one specially designed for healthful sleep from www.healthjourneys.com.

Write. Before bedtime, jot down all the things you need to address the next day to get them out of your head and onto paper. Journaling thoughts and feelings can serve a similar purpose.

Avoid over-stimulating yourself with caffeine, especially in the evening. You may want to considerably reduce or eliminate caffeinated beverages.

Go easy on the alcohol. Drinking alcohol at dinner or after may cause you to wake up soon after falling asleep. Alcohol is a counterproductive intervention for insomnia.

Reduce or eliminate smoking. Nicotine is a stimulant, which disrupts sleep. Smokers also may experience nicotine withdrawal as the night progresses, making it harder to sleep.

Try an herbal soother. Herbal compounds can help ease you into sleep without the need to resort to sleeping pills. You can find them in health food stores.

Don't go to bed either very full or hungry. Either can make it harder to sleep. Dairy products and turkey contain tryptophan, which acts as a natural sleep inducer.

Don't try too hard. The worst thing to do is to lie there thinking: "I have to get some sleep! I'm going to be exhausted tomorrow and I have a test!" These thoughts will keep you awake. Instead, do something boring or bore yourself to sleep with a word game.

If these steps don't work, **consider medication to break a protracted cycle**. Also, consider counseling to assess for and treat any anxiety condition, depression or other cause. The GHC Counseling and Advising Center offers up to 8 free sessions of personal counseling to students.