

## Zzzz Sleep Help

Sleep is a vital part of caring for your mind. Without sufficient sleep, the brain becomes distracted, forgetful, and sluggish. Sleep deprivation often leads to worsening of mood instability, irritability, and impulsivity. Sleep deprivation also leads to decreased immunity which in turn can lead to frequent bouts of illness. A sleep deprived body is a body that is full of aches and pains. It is understandably difficult to feel positive about yourself if your body is in pain.

For many people with depression, mania, anxiety, and post traumatic stress disorder, sleep is no simple matter. For some, falling asleep is difficult. For others, staying asleep through the night is difficult. For yet others, getting up in the morning is difficult. And then for some, they have great difficulty with all of these phases of sleep.

The first step in improving your sleep is to collect baseline data. Use the attached sleep log. Fill out the sleep log three or four times. This data will guide you in the best steps that you can take to improve your sleep. Since sleep problems can often be related to physical problems and to the use of certain medications, you'll find it helpful to research their influence. Your therapist can suggest some good ways to get started.

For most people, the following sleep tips will help them get the restful sleep that they need.

**Keep a regular sleep schedule.** Our bodies have a natural clock. A regular sleep schedule conditions our physiology to a sleep-wake cycle.

**Develop Regular Bedtime Routines** Establishing a regular sleep routine which prepares your mind and body to switch from activity to sleep. Examples of routines include shutting off some of the lights, listening to soothing music, reading a book, drinking a warm glass of milk, or having a warm soak in the tub.

**Create sleep harmony** by making your bedroom conducive to sleep. Your bed and pillows should be comfortable. Adjust the elements in your sleep environment including light (dark is best), temperature and noise. If necessary, use blackout curtains, eye shades, ear plugs, or air purifiers.

**Don't Watch the Clock** If you cannot fall asleep, it's best NOT to lie in bed and try to "force" yourself to sleep. Avoid checking the clock repeatedly. It's common wisdom that if you do not fall back asleep within 15-20 minutes, you should get out of bed and go to another room. Try something relaxing such as listening to music or reading. For some people however it is beneficial to remain comfortably in bed even if sleep does not easily come. By relaxing one's muscles and limbs, the body can do vital 'maintenance work' on itself.

**Consider The Use Of Medications, Supplements, Or Remedies** Many people turn to medications, remedies, and supplements to help them fall asleep and stay asleep. Some sleep medications may be only available with a prescription from a physician; others may be purchased over the counter. Remedies may be specially formulated by homeopaths. They can be purchased ready-made at pharmacies and health food stores. Supplements are also wide available at pharmacies and health food stores.

For some people, falling asleep is less a problem than staying asleep. They frequently find themselves awake well before they need to get out of bed. Such awakening may be caused by physical discomforts such as a bad mattress or environmental factors such as excessive noise or heat. Vivid and disturbing dreams can also interfere with sleep. Most often, early awakening and erratic sleep is caused by disturbed sleep patterns which are an aspect of clinical depression stress. As you progress in your treatment and recovery you'll find yourself sleeping blissfully and happily through the night.

## **SOME IMPORTANT REMARKS ABOUT MEDICATIONS AND REMEDIES**

Prescription sleep medications are most often medications whose side effects is drowsiness. The most well known sleep medications, also known as hypnotics, are chemically similar to benzodiazepines, medications used to relieve the physical manifestations of anxiety. Other prescriptions medications are anti-psychotic medications and antidepressant medications. Such medications are used in dosages far under the amount needed for depression and psychosis.

Prescription medications are almost always effective when used according to the manufacturer's instructions. Nevertheless, there are four principle downsides to the use of prescription medications:

- a) Their use can mask the underlying reasons for your difficulty with sleep.
- b) These medications can trigger dependency and addiction. For almost all people the benefit of using the medication far out weighs the risk of addiction. For the small minority, however, the chaos and disruption that can be potentially caused by addiction and dependence on sleep medication is serious enough to warrant caution.
- c) Doctors often neglect to warn patients about the side effects of prescription sleep medication. These mild side effects can be very disconcerting when one is not forewarned. Side effects include increased anxiety and jitteriness during the day. Some people also find themselves sleep walking and engaging in activities without any conscious awareness. Such side effects are rare. Still, forewarned is forearmed.
- 4) These medications loose their effectiveness when used too often.

Homeopathic remedies and supplements for sleep are also very popular. Many people who use them find a great deal of relief from sleep problems. Still, keep in mind the following guidelines:

- a) Just as prescription sleep medications can mask the real cause of insomnia, so can homeopathic remedies and supplements.

- b) Some homeopathic remedies contain herbs and ingredients that can conflict with medications that one may be taking. When you begin using such remedies check with a competent pharmacist to make sure that the remedy or supplement is safe for you.
- c) Some homeopathic remedies contain alcohol. For individuals who are trying to avoid consuming alcohol for recovery reasons or because of potential conflicts with prescription medications, this alcohol can be quite problematic.
- d) Melatonin is a supplement that is often used when it is difficult to fall asleep. It is believed to work by 'fooling' the body into a state of sleepiness. While it can be very helpful for people whose body clock is out of sync (such as occurs in the case of jet lag) it won't help if one cannot fall asleep because of anxiety, depression, and stress.

Over the counter sleep aids can also be quite effective when used properly. Like prescription sleep medications, over the counter medications are medicines that are used for other problems but cause sleepiness as a side effect. The most common type of over the counter medication is the antihistamine, diphenhydramine hydrochloride or Benadryl. It is often sandwiched together with an analgesic such as acetaminophen, aspirin, or ibuprofen.

While over the counter sleep aids are safe, three points should be kept in mind.

- a) If used frequently, these medicines can become less effective.
- b) Many people feel hung over and exhausted throughout the day when using these medications.
- c) If the over the counter remedy is sandwiched with a pain reliever then frequent use of medication can expose you to a second, unneeded medication which can have negative effects on your body. Ask someone knowledgeable to help you select the sleep remedy that doesn't come along with anything that you don't need.

## Sleep Log

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Describe the quality of your sleep last night. (Frequent waking? Deep sleep?)							
Time you went to bed							
How long did it take to fall asleep?							
Total amount of time you slept							
If you woke up during the night, how often? About what time(s)?							
Describe what woke you each time. (For example: worry, physical discomfort, sweating, need to go to bathroom, etc.)							
Were you able to fall back to sleep?							
Were you snoring, kicking, or tossing and turning during sleep?							
On a scale of 1 to 10 (1=poorly), how well could you pursue the day's activities?							
Did you feel well rested when you started the day?							
Did you need to take a nap? If yes, what time?							