

Common Mistakes Made With Sleep



1 Not going to bed and getting up at consistent times each day

Some of us can get away with changing the times we go to bed and get up. However many people cannot. These people do far better with regular hours of sleep. This lets our internal body clock build a strong sleep wake cycle. Going to bed and getting up at similar times is good. This goes for both weekdays and weekends.

2 Poor sleep environment

The bedroom should be quiet, dark and comfortable. It's important that it is not too cold or too hot. Comfortable mattress, pillows and blankets are also essential. Electronic equipment can distract you. These include computers, TV and mobile phones. It is best to leave them outside the bedroom. Do not have a clock that you can see overnight, turn it around to face the wall.

3 Not getting ready for sleep

Many of us need to wind down before sleep. Steer clear of vigorous exercise in the late evening. Make sure your last meal of the day is at least two hours before bed. In the hour before bed, avoid computer games. TV shows that disturb or stimulate you are also not a good idea. Relaxation routines can help, as can quiet music. If you need a snack, make it a light one.

4 Spending too much time napping during the day

Long daytime naps can get in the way of a good night's sleep. They can make it hard to break bad sleep habits. Only nap if you really need to. If so, keep the nap short, no more than 20 minutes. Naps longer than an hour can make you feel groggy afterwards. You might find it hard to get going straight away. Do not nap after mid afternoon.

5 Frequent use of sedative drugs

Sedatives do not deal with the cause of sleep problems. You can become addicted to them and it can be hard to suddenly stop. Also the longer you take them, the less they will work. This means they are really only a short term solution for a short term problem, such as severe grief or stress.

6 Using alcohol to help sleep

Alcohol is a “downer” like sedatives. It can help you get to sleep. But the problem is that it disturbs the quality of sleep. Overall, it is bad for your sleep.

7 Television in the bedroom

TV can stimulate you. It is a distraction in the bedroom. If you fall asleep with the TV on, you will often wake up again. Then you may start following the show again. This does not build good sleep habits. Get the TV out of the bedroom.

8 Staying in bed when unable to sleep

Staying in bed if you can't sleep can make you annoyed and frustrated. It is better to get out of bed and go to another room. Stay there until you feel sleepy. Eventually, you will start to want to sleep. Sleepiness comes in waves, wait for yours and go back to bed then. To stay in bed feeling upset is to start to build a link in your mind between the bed and lack of sleep. This is the opposite of what you need.

This information is produced by:

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A voluntary group offering assistance and support to people and their families living with sleep disorders

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The peak national association of clinicians and scientists devoted to investigation of sleep and its disorders

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9 Thinking the problem with your sleep is worse than it really is

Many people who find it hard to either get to sleep or stay asleep become worried about it. They think they have less sleep than they really do. Often poor sleepers are not good at knowing whether they are awake or asleep. Use relaxation as one of the techniques to help. Tell yourself that rest is good, even if you are not asleep.

10 Ignoring the possibility of having a specific sleep disorder that needs attention

Some people with sleep problems have something specific that is causing this. It could be obstructive sleep apnoea or restless legs syndrome, or it could be a drug side effect. If you think this applies to you, discuss this with your doctor.



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