

# FitFacts®

## Sleep

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU WILL NEVER GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP...EVER AGAIN? YOU ARE NOT ALONE. IN FACT, INSOMNIA IS THE MOST COMMON SLEEP COMPLAINT AND IS ONE OF THE TOP REASONS THAT AMERICANS VISIT A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER. INSOMNIA CONSISTS OF TROUBLE FALLING ASLEEP, DIFFICULTY STAYING ASLEEP, OR FEELING UNREFRESHED DESPITE GETTING ENOUGH REST.

The causes of insomnia include stress, anxiety, depression, diseases, medications, sleep disorders, and poor sleep habits. While a visit to your health care provider is definitely a good idea, you should also determine whether your personal habits promote or prevent a good night's sleep. Here are some general rules to follow for getting your zzzzs :

- **Regular exercise promotes good sleep.** This is one of the most important ways to promote continuous sleep. Moderate or vigorous exercise should be done no more than 3 hours before sleep, while relaxing exercise (such as yoga) can be done before bedtime.
- **Keep a regular sleep schedule.** Go to bed and wake up around the same time every day of the week.
- **Don't linger in bed.** If you can't fall asleep after 15-20 minutes of being in bed because your mind is racing or you are worrying about whether you will sleep, get up and go into a different darkened room. This is where you can do your worrying , read a book, or do any other non-stimulating activity. Stay there until you are sleepy. Return to bed. Repeat as needed.
- **Sleep only as much as you need to feel rested.**
- **Avoid naps.**
- **Get regular exposure to natural light,** preferably in the late afternoon.
- **Don't watch TV, listen to the radio, read, or use electronic devices (computer, phone, etc) in bed.** This causes you to associate the bed with wakefulness. Reserve the bed for the two S's (sleep and sex).
- **Avoid caffeine after lunch.** In addition to the obvious culprits, don't forget to steer clear of hidden sources of caffeine such as decaf coffee (it still has a little), tea, and chocolate.
- **No alcohol or cigarettes near bedtime.** While alcohol can help you fall asleep, it disrupts your ability to stay asleep. Cigarettes are stimulating and disrupt all parts of the sleep cycle.
- **Avoid large meals right before bedtime,** but don't go to bed hungry.
- **Establish a relaxing bedtime routine.** This could include a warm bath or shower, massage, meditation, imagery, or quiet time.



- **Have a quiet, comfortable bedroom.** Keep your room on the cooler side, turn off bright lights, and turn on white noise (like a fan) if it helps.
- **Hide the clock** if you are a “clock-watcher.”
- **Discuss with your health care provider** whether medications, herbal supplements, or other therapies may be appropriate for you.

As with most other health issues, making sure that you are living your healthiest lifestyle is an absolute must. People who exercise regularly, eat a healthy diet, and keep stress levels low are the ones who sleep the best. Sweet dreams!

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[American Council on Exercise](#)

Bootzin, R.R., Perlis, M.L. (1992). Nonpharmacologic treatments of insomnia. *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 53, 37-41.

[National Sleep Foundation](#)