

SHIRLEYPAKDAMAN

Psy.D.

PSY26413

310.431.9866

drshirleypakdaman.com

Healthy Sleep Habits

What is normal sleep?

The single most important factor in getting sleep, is being sleepy enough! But what makes us sleepy?

Your body's circadian rhythm (physical, mental, and behavioral changes that follow a roughly 24-hour cycle in response primarily to light and darkness in your environment).

Your body's drive towards homeostasis, or balance. Being awake (and staying awake) longer during the day will make you much sleepier at night. Naps during the day "reset" your sleepiness factor, making you less sleepy and more difficult to fall asleep when you want to at night.

How much sleep you need varies by individual and by age. It is up to us to adjust our expectations of how much sleep we need vs. how much we expect to get each night. The best measure of if you are getting enough sleep, is if you feel rested and awake throughout most of the day. If you feel like you are not getting enough sleep or if your sleep is not restful, knowing what helps and hurts sleep is a good place to start.

Things that help sleep:

Exercise: Done earlier in the day, can make you feel more tired at night and fall asleep faster. (Tip: exercise done too close to bed time can give you more energy, making it harder to fall asleep. However, taking a peaceful walk after dinner should be fine.)

Daily routines: Having a routine, helps your body stay in a consistent circadian rhythm. Getting up at the same time every day (regardless of how you slept the night before) is the most important routine. This helps your body maintain a steady circadian rhythm and exposes you to sunlight which stimulates the hormones that make you feel more awake and alert.

Treating medical problems: Get help for pain or health issues that cause frequent urination which can wake you.

Treating sleep disorders: If you find yourself Snoring, gasping, choking, waking up short of breath, or someone observes you ceasing to breathe while asleep, you may have sleep apnea or another medical sleep disorder.

A comfortable sleep environment: Make sure your room is sufficiently dark (or wear an eye mask), a cool temperature, and quiet. Reduce random sounds by getting a white noise machine or fan if needed. Treat yourself to a comfortable bed, mattress, pillow, and sheets, it's for your health!

Use the bed for sleep and sex only: Make your bedroom an ideal environment and sacred space for sleeping. This creates an association in your mind (bed = sleep vs. bed = being awake doing stuff). Move TV, phone, work, reading, etc. out of your bedroom.

Relaxation: Progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, mindful meditation, gentle yoga...anything that relaxes you can be a part of your bedtime routine.

Having a bedtime routine or ritual: Some people love a warm shower or bath, others read books/magazines in another room...any quiet practice that helps your body slow down and muscles relax can help you clear your mind of worries and calm your emotions.

Things that hurt sleep:

Alcohol: It seems to relax you and make it easier to fall asleep, but when alcohol is metabolized in the body and the sugars break down, they act as stimulants. It's like someone poured a cup of coffee into you while you were sleeping! This can cause poor quality sleep or for you to wake up too early.

Caffeine and nicotine: Both of these are stimulants. If you must use them, limit use to before around 3PM so they interfere less with your sleep.

Worries and stress: Try keeping a notebook by your bed so you can write down your worries to remember to deal with them the next day...nobody is best at solving their problems at 3AM! In the light of day, the problems may seem less complicated and distressing than they did while you were tossing and turning. Psychotherapy or stress reduction methods could make a world of difference.

Untreated anxiety and depression: Insomnia is a symptom of these disorders. People with anxiety often have trouble falling or staying asleep. Depression can cause people to wake up too early and have difficulty falling back asleep. Fortunately, psychotherapy helps.

Poor sleep environment: A bedroom that is too noisy, hot, light, or cluttered with distractions.

Untreated sleep disorders: Talk to your doctor if you think you have a sleep disorder beyond insomnia.

Using your bed for work, TV, eating, worrying: This creates an association in your mind of "bed = being awake and doing stuff" and makes it harder to fall asleep once the lights are out.

Screens that emit light (TV, phone, tablet): bright electronic is really similar to sunlight when processed in the brain. This tricks your brain into thinking it is daytime and stimulates wakefulness. Cut off screen time 1-2 hours before you want to fall asleep. Record your favorite shows or watch them later online.

If you are having problems with daytime sleepiness, changes in mood or memory as a result of sleepiness, sleep better when you are away from home, or worry about sleep during the day, please call me to set a consultation for treatment for insomnia. Most patients who adhere to treatment have significant improvement within 4-6 weeks. Please visit my website's "Treatment" section for more information. For a complimentary consultation and to set up an appointment, call me at (310) 431-9866.