



## **Tip Sheet: Strategies to Help Promote Sleep/Wake Patterns**

### **Introduction:**

If you are having problems with falling asleep, staying asleep, early morning awakenings, or excessive daytime sleepiness or napping, try some of these strategies that have proven successful in helping others improve their sleep/wake patterns.

### **Sleep Hygiene Strategies:**

- Avoid stimulants, such as caffeine-containing products before going to bed (coffee, tea, chocolate, soft drinks, nicotine)
- Sleep in a dark, well-ventilated, cool, quiet, and relaxing room
- Avoid exercising 2-4 hours prior to bedtime
- Develop a standard, predictable bedtime ritual ( a routine or set number of actions before going to sleep each night)

### **Relaxation Strategies:**

- Take a warm shower or bath each evening prior to going to sleep
- Listen to quiet music, view a relaxing video or CD, or read a non-stimulating book or magazine
- Meditate, get a back rub or a massage, or use other relaxation strategies at bedtime such as progressive relaxation, or yoga, to decrease the stress you may be experiencing

### **Sleep Restrictions Strategies:**

- Go to bed only when you are sleepy
- Limit the time you spend in bed to the number of hours you usually spend sleeping
- Add one additional hour if you feel ill or if you feel unable to get up at the scheduled time in the morning
- Avoid napping during the day. However, if you feel drowsy or fatigued following a disturbed night's sleep, and need to nap during the day, limit your naps to no more than two naps daily, each lasting less than 60 minutes in length

### **Stimulus Control Strategies:**

- Use your bed only sleeping and intimacy. Do not read, watch television, or eat in bed
- Select the same time each night to go to bed and sleep
- If you are unable to fall asleep after 30 minutes, get up and go into another room. Stay up for as long as you want, then return to bed to sleep. Avoid watching the clock
- If you remain awake for more than 10 minutes after returning to bed, repeat getting up again and going into another room as many times as you need to. Once your mind has accepted the association of the bedroom for sleep, repeats will be less necessary
- Set your alarm clock for the same time each morning to awaken, regardless of the amount of sleep you had during the night

### **Activity Strategies:**

- Various walking and other forms of activities/exercise have been shown to improve sleep, decrease fatigue, and improve mood
- Discuss with your provider what specific forms of activities or exercise might be safe for you to do routinely during the week

### **Dietary Strategies:**

- Eating a high-protein snack 2 hours before bedtime (milk, turkey, or other foods high in Tryptophan) may be of help
- Avoid a heavy meal or alcohol before bedtime
- Regulate fluid intake prior to bedtime to avoid frequent awakenings to urinate

### **Symptom Strategies:**

- Having other symptoms, such as pain, fatigue, hot flashes, or having to get up numerous times during the night to urinate can all affect your sleep
- Talk to your provider about how to best treat these and other symptoms that may be affecting your sleep
- If you are worried, anxious, or depressed, talk to your provider about resources to help you cope with these concerns

### **Medication Strategies:**

- A variety of sleep medications (over the counter and prescribed) are available to help you sleep Please ask your provider about which sleep medication would be best for you to take

### **Other Strategies:**

- If none of the above strategies helps improve your sleep/wake patterns, talk to your provider, as further workup and referral to a sleep specialist might be beneficial