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Sleep Hygiene Tips for Insomnia

People with insomnia have trouble falling or staying asleep, or they do not feel rested when they wake up. Insomnia is not about the number of hours of sleep a person gets as everyone needs a different amount of sleep. In order to improve the quality of your sleep, you can follow good "sleep hygiene." That means that you:

- Sleep only long enough to feel rested and then get out of bed
- Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on the weekends
- Do not try to force yourself to sleep; if you can't sleep, get out of bed and try again later
- Have coffee, tea, soda, and other foods that have caffeine only in the morning
- Do not go to bed hungry
- Avoid alcohol in the late afternoon, evening, and bedtime; while alcohol may help you get sleepy, it disrupts sleep later in the evening, so no "night caps"
- Avoid smoking, especially in the evening
- Adjust the bedroom environment (light, noise, temperature) so that you are comfortable before you lie down
- Keep your bedroom dark, cool, quiet, and free of reminders of work or other things that cause you stress
- Exercise regularly, preferably four or more hours before bedtime
- Deal with concerns or worries before bedtime if you can; make a list of things to work on for the next day so anxiety is reduced at night if you need to
- Avoid looking at computers, phones, tablets, TVs, or reading devices ("e-books") that give off light before bed as these can make it harder to fall asleep
- Do not read, watch TV, or do anything other than sleep or have intercourse in your bed

Other things that can improve sleep include:

- Relaxation therapy, in which you focus on relaxing all the muscles in your body
 - Beginning with the muscles in your face, squeeze (contract) your muscles gently for one to two seconds and then relax. Repeat several times. Use the same technique for other muscle groups, usually in the following

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sequence: jaw and neck, shoulders, upper arms, lower arms, fingers, chest, abdomen, buttocks, thighs, calves, and feet. Repeat this cycle for 45 minutes, if necessary. This relaxation program can promote restfulness and sleep

- You can try over-the-counter melatonin which may help you fall asleep; this is regulated as a supplement and comes in varying dosages, though 0.1-0.3mg appears to be sufficient when using for insomnia
- Working with a counselor or psychologist to deal with the problems that might be causing poor sleep

If you continue to have problems with sleep despite implementing the changes above consistently for several weeks, you may benefit from prescription medications and should talk to your doctor about these options.