

WIDE AWAKE

Some people may experience poor sleep as a result of one or more of the following reasons:

stress

depression & anxiety

illnesses

withdrawal from an addiction

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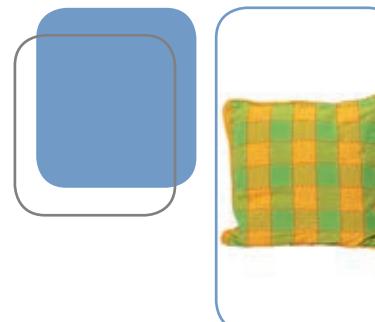
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SLEEP

Hygiene



NATIONAL
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Sleep is essential for a person's health and well-being.



Effects of alcohol and drugs on sleep

Some people rely on alcohol or prescription drugs (such as benzodiazepines) to induce sleep. Although the use of alcohol or prescription drugs can create a sedating effect, it can cause sleep problems too.

People who use alcohol or prescription drugs will experience a lessening of the original effect of the substance over time. This is a common phenomenon known as tolerance, which means that over time as a person uses the substance, he or she will need more and more of it to achieve the same sedating effect.

In addition, withdrawal may be experienced upon discontinuing the use of the substance. Some of these withdrawal symptoms are the opposite of the substance's direct effect on the body, for instance alertness instead of a sedating effect in this case.



What should you do?

Staying away from alcohol or prescription drugs will allow the brain to heal and natural sleep will resume over time. During this process as your sleep quantity or quality is being restored, it is important to resist the temptation of using alcohol or prescription drugs to induce sleep.

Mild improvements are typically seen in one to two weeks from the start of abstinence. These improvements could be in the form of a longer sleep period and waking up less often at night.

The process of healing takes time and the rate of recovery varies from person to person. Some may need two to three months, while others a longer period of time. It helps to be mentally prepared for this and to be patient. Rather than relying on substances to achieve sleep, here are some tips for you to work on to improve your sleep.

Tips for Achieving Better Sleep

Do:

- go to bed at the same time each day.
- get up from bed at the same time each day.
- get regular exercise each day, preferably in the morning. This includes stretching and aerobic exercise.
- get regular exposure to the outdoors or bright lights, especially in the late afternoon. This is important for the production of melatonin, a hormone to help sleep.
- keep the temperature in your bedroom comfortable. Ensure that it is neither too warm nor too cold.
- keep the bedroom quiet when sleeping.
- keep the bedroom dark enough to facilitate sleep.
- use your bed only for sleep and sex.
- take medications as directed. It is often helpful to take prescribed medications one to two hours before bedtime, to give them time to work.
- practise relaxation techniques just before going to sleep. (e.g. muscle relaxation, imagery, massage, warm bath, etc.)



Don't:

- exercise just before going to bed.
- engage in stimulating activities just before going to bed, such as playing a competitive game, watching an exciting programme on television, or having an important discussion with a loved one.
- have caffeine in the late afternoon (coffee, tea, chocolate, sodas, etc.)
- read, or watch television in bed.
- use alcohol to help you sleep.
- go to bed when you are feeling too hungry or too full.
- drink water just before going to bed.
 - Avoid fluids two hours before bedtime.
 - Empty your bladder just before going to bed. A full bladder in the middle of the night can wake you up and disturb your sleep.
- take sleeping pills. Tolerance can develop rapidly with these medications.
- take daytime naps.
- command yourself to go to sleep. This only makes your mind and body more alert. If you are unable to fall asleep after lying down for 15 minutes, get out of bed, and do some light reading or listen to soothing music. Return to the bed only when you feel sleepy. Repeat this until you are able to fall asleep.

If you have any questions or would like learn more about sleep hygiene, talk to our counsellor or doctor today.