Good Sleep Habits – Tips for an Improved Sleep

1) Reduce light, noise and extremes of temperature in your bedroom.

2) Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol before bedtime.

3) Avoid a heavy meal within two hours of bedtime. However, a light snack may help if you're hungry.

4) Regular exercise late in the afternoon or in the early evening may deepen sleep, but don't exercise vigorously within three hours of bedtime.

5) To be relaxed at bedtime, allow about one hour of quiet activity prior to going to bed, i.e., reading, watching television, or listening to music.

6) Develop a bedtime ritual such as reading or listening to relaxing music, clean your teeth, etc, so that your body knows that you are getting ready to go to sleep.

7) Don't go to bed too early, i.e., not before you are sleepy or you will have difficulty going to sleep. This may make you feel irritated and frustrated about not feeling sleepy, not falling asleep, and anxious about how you will cope the next day.

8) Don't stay in bed if you're awake. If you go to bed when you're tired, but don't fall asleep within about 15–20 minutes (estimate this time, don't use a clock), get out of bed, go to another room and do something mundane until you feel sleepy again. Repeat this procedure until you fall asleep quickly.

9) Get up at the same time in the morning, as this will help train your body clock. Don't sleep in on weekends or after a late night.

10) Try not to nap during the day, as this tends to reduce your sleepiness at night and results in poorer quality sleep during the night.

11) Don't worry if you can't get to sleep at night because worry and anxiety will delay sleep even more. The harder you try, the worse it will be. If you get very little sleep one night, you will still function the next day although you may be a little more irritable and tired than usual.

12) Try to get about 8 hours sleep per night.

Information from Assessment Package, Sleep Disorders Service, Christchurch Hospital, May 2008