

Sleep and your Health

— By Anita Young



Sleep affects your mental and physical health. Getting good sleep helps boost your mind and mood and can help prevent health problems. Your mind and body are healthier when you sleep well. Your body needs time every day to rest and heal. Some sleep disorders, such as insomnia, sleep apnea, and restless leg syndrome, make it harder to fall asleep or stay asleep. This can lead to daytime sleepiness and make it more difficult to stay in good mental health.

Having a sleep problem can also trigger a mental health condition or make current mental health conditions worse. Also, mental health conditions or treatments can sometimes cause sleep problems.

TRY THESE TIPS TO HELP IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP:

- Try to go to sleep when you feel sleepy and then get up at the same time each morning.
- Do not take naps after 3 p.m. if you normally sleep at night.
- Do not drink caffeinated or alcoholic drinks or smoke late in the day or at night.
- Exercise on most days. Exercise or physical activity done too close to bedtime can make it harder to fall asleep. Experts recommend exercising at least 5 or 6 hours before your bedtime, especially if you have insomnia.
- Do not eat or drink a lot within about 3 hours of bedtime.
- Keep your bedroom dark, quiet, and cool. If light is a problem, try a sleeping mask. If noise is a problem, try earplugs, a fan, or a “white noise” machine to cover up the sounds.
- Follow a routine to help relax and wind down before sleep, such as reading a book, listening to music, or taking a bath.
- If you cannot sleep within 20 minutes of going to bed, or don't feel drowsy, get out of bed. Read or do a quiet activity until you feel sleepy. Then try going back to bed.
- Do not do anything in your bed that could make you more awake. Using a mobile phone, watching TV, or eating in bed can make it harder for you to fall asleep in bed.
- Do not look at bright screens like a laptop or smart phone before bed.
- See your doctor or a sleep specialist if you think that you have a sleep problem.