

Getting a good night's sleep:

Stress can sometimes affect our sleep and students often find themselves having difficulty falling and/or staying asleep. Since getting enough sleep helps you function well in class, it's important to follow these basic tips for good sleep hygiene :

- **Exercise and stay active.** Activity helps promote a good night's sleep. Get at least 20 to 30 minutes of vigorous exercise daily at least five to six hours before bedtime.
- **Check your medications.** If you take medications regularly, check with your doctor to see if they may be contributing to your insomnia. Also check the labels of OTC products to see if they contain caffeine or other stimulants, such as pseudoephedrine.
- **Avoid or limit naps.** Naps can make it harder to fall asleep at night. If you can't get by without one, try to limit a nap to no more than 30 minutes and don't nap after 3 p.m.
- **Avoid or limit caffeine and alcohol and don't use nicotine.** All of these can make it harder to sleep. Avoid caffeine after lunchtime. Avoiding alcohol can help prevent restless sleep and frequent awakenings.
- **Don't put up with pain.** If a painful condition bothers you, make sure the pain reliever you take is effective enough to control pain while you're sleeping.
- **Stick to a sleep schedule.** Keep your bedtime and wake time consistent from day to day, including on weekends.

At bedtime:

- **Avoid large meals and beverages before bed.** A light snack is fine. But avoid eating too much late in the evening to reduce the chance of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and improve sleep. Drink less before bedtime so that you won't have to urinate as often.
- **Use your bed and bedroom only for sleeping or sex.** Don't read, work or eat in bed. Avoid TV, computers, video games, smartphones or other screens just before bed, as the light can interfere with your sleep cycle.
- **Make your bedroom comfortable for sleep.** Close your bedroom door or create a subtle background noise, such as a running fan, to help drown out other noises. Keep your bedroom temperature comfortable, usually cooler than during the day, and dark. Don't keep a computer or TV in your bedroom.

- **Hide the bedroom clocks.** Set your alarm so that you know when to get up, but then hide all clocks in your bedroom, including your wristwatch and cellphone, so you don't worry about what time it is.
- **Find ways to relax.** Try to put your worries and planning aside when you get into bed. A warm bath or a massage before bedtime can help prepare you for sleep. Create a relaxing bedtime ritual, such as reading, soft music, breathing exercises, yoga or prayer.
- **Avoid trying too hard to sleep.** The harder you try, the more awake you'll become. Read in another room until you become very drowsy, then go to bed to sleep.
- **Get out of bed when you're not sleeping.** Sleep as much as you need to feel rested, and then get out of bed. If you can't sleep, get out of bed after 20 minutes and do something relaxing, such as reading. Then try again to get to sleep.