



# Happy Homes Doc!

## I Just Can't Sleep

Over 50% of adults complain of past or current sleep difficulties. Common problems include sleeping too much, feeling tired or sluggish, and having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep. Sleep may be more important than you think. Your body and brain require quality sleep in order to function properly.

### Consider the Following Items That May Affect Your Sleep.

- Is your bedroom "sleep friendly"? Environmental factors such as noise, too much light, or a room temperature that is too hot or too cold can affect the quality of your sleep.
- Are you comfortable enough? The quality of the mattress you sleep on or the type of pillow you use may also interfere with your sleep.
- Does your daily routine increase your chances of sleeping well? Daytime inactivity or naps can lead to feelings of fatigue and will often also result in insomnia at night. Irregular cycles of wakefulness and sleepiness may contribute to sleep problems. For example, your sleep can be affected by ordinary decisions about when to exercise, shower, eat meals, or go out with friends.
- Do you feel secure? You may not be able to relax or sleep restfully due to feeling unsafe. It may be helpful to secure your home with extra locks, or keep a phone by the bed.
- Do you worry about things when you go to bed? Some people engage in negative or obsessive thinking when they go to bed. If you are a person who spends long periods of time worrying, it may be useful to set aside a 30 minute "worry time" earlier in the day. During this time, write down all the problems that you're concerned about and brainstorm possible solutions.

### How Can Sleep Habits Improve Sleep?

Research has shown that if you are experiencing sleep problems, a technique called STIMULUS CONTROL can help you regain control of your sleep, and break the cycle of poor sleep patterns. It will take time for sleep changes to happen, so be patient and persevere.

STIMULUS CONTROL rules include:

- Lie down to go to sleep only when you are sleepy.

STIMULUS CONTROL rules (continued)

- Do not use your bed for anything except sleep- do not read, watch television, eat or worry in bed. Sexual activity is the only exception to this rule. Afterwards, follow the stimulus control rules when you intend to go to sleep.
- If you don't go to sleep within 15 minutes of going to bed, get out of bed and stay up until you feel sleepy. Go back to bed only when you feel sleepy. Remember that the goal is to associate your bed with falling asleep quickly!
- If you awaken during the night, repeat the above step. Do this as often as is necessary throughout the night.
- Set your alarm and get up at the same time every morning, regardless of how much sleep you got during the night. This will help your body to acquire a consistent sleep rhythm.
- Do not nap during the day.
- Wind down an hour before bed.
- Reduce caffeine and alcohol intake late in the day.
- Reduce physical and mental stimulation late in the day (except for sexual activity).
- Do not do vigorous exercise close to bedtime.
- Face the clock away from you or don't look at it.
- Have a light carbohydrate or dairy snack before bedtime. (Milk and cookies-yum!)
- Avoid chocolate or large amounts of sugar.
- Avoid drinking large amounts of fluid late in the day.
- Take a hot bath/shower before going to bed.

If these steps do not help, you may need further assistance or information from a medical doctor or psychologist.

**Ward & Associates Psychological Services, PLLC**  
**1414 W. Franklin Street**  
**Boise, ID 83702**

**Phone: (208) 343-0647**

**Fax: (208) 395-1948**

**E-mail: [DrWard@happyhomesdoc.com](mailto:DrWard@happyhomesdoc.com)**