

## SLEEP PROMOTION

Sleep disruption and difficulty getting to sleep are very common symptoms of post acute withdrawal for those in early recovery. The affects of sleep disturbance can last a very long time, however there are several techniques that can be used to help with falling asleep and staying asleep. The most beneficial techniques are minor lifestyle and environment changes — such as preparing for sleep, following a sleep schedule, and making your bedroom appropriate for sleep.

### Preparing for Sleep

Preparation for sleep makes your body get into “sleep mode” and builds a routine to set the stage for your mind to relax as well.

- Relax your body: use progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, stretching, breathing, or take a warm bath.
- Mentally unwind: about 30 minutes before bedtime, meditate, read or listen to relaxing music.
- Eat a light snack: a high-carbohydrate snack such as a plain bagel may make you relax more as your body metabolizes. Avoid sugars, spices and heavy foods as these will have the opposite effect.
- Make a list: write down the problems and/or tasks that you need to take care of and leave it for the morning. Avoid thinking about the problems and tasks, and trust that you will be better prepared for them in the morning.

### Follow a Sleep Schedule

This is probably the most important routine change an individual can make to improve the ability to fall asleep and stay asleep for a restful night.

- Go to bed and get up at the same time every day of the week, including weekends.

### Special Note for Shift Workers

Try to conduct your work in a well lit area, and wear sunglasses if it is daylight when you drive home. Try to make your bedroom as dark as possible, possibly wear a sleep mask.

## Prepare Your Environment

Where you sleep makes a bigger difference than one might expect. It is important to prepare your sleep environment to calm your mind and your body.

- Keep your bedroom clean, neatly organized, and free from clutter. These things cause uneasiness and elevate stress before trying to sleep.
- Block out or mask noise. A noise generator can be a very useful tool in creating a steady ambiance within the bedroom that masks over sudden noises that can disturb sleep.
- Adjust the room temperature and/or body temperature to where you are comfortable.
- Move the clock so you cannot see the readout from your pillow position. Seeing the time when you wake up from insomnia adds stress and anxiety.
- Reduce the light in the room. Darkness helps the brain stay in sleep mode. You may want to use a sleep mask.

## Things to Avoid Before Sleep

Equally important to preparing for sleep is avoiding things that can rob you from a restful sleep.

- Exercise: avoid exercising three hours before going to sleep. The endorphins released into the brain and the change in metabolism of the body will inhibit sleep.
- Smoking: avoid smoking six hours before going to sleep. Nicotine is a stimulant and will prevent the brain from relaxing.
- Caffeine: avoid caffeine altogether, or at a minimum do not ingest caffeine eight hours before going to sleep.
- Liquids: avoid drinking fluids just before bedtime in order to reduce the urge to urinate in the middle of the night.

## Medications that Effect Sleep

There are a number of medications that may interfere with sleep.

- Alertness medications
- Analgesics
- Antidepressants
- Arthritis medications
- Asthma medications
- Blood pressure medications
- Cold/allergy medications
- Diet pills