

# HELPFUL SLEEP RULES

The following rules can help you to achieve a better pattern of sleep. It can take at least several days, and often up to a week before you will see improvement. It can sometimes seem like things are getting worse instead of better as you try to correct your sleep problems. Your body will need time to adjust to a new schedule.

1. Get up at the same time every day, seven days a week (preferably in the morning, not sometime like two the afternoon!). This is perhaps the most important rule, as the time you get up sets your biologic clock each day.
2. Stay in bed for time equal to what you need for your typical night of sleep. If eight hours is what you typically need, then only spend eight hours in bed, even if you only sleep one hour! Don't spend more time in bed to make up for inefficiency. You want to train your body to sleep efficiently. This is probably the second most important rule.
3. Avoid getting frustrated about not being able to sleep, this only makes it worse. You can't force sleep. Your body will eventually get the sleep it needs. If you're awake more than about one half-hour get up and go back to sleep when you are tired. Do not make up this time by sleeping in (remember rule number 1). Remind yourself that your body can tolerate lack of sleep on a short-term basis. It is unlikely that our ancestors always got eight hours of sleep, yet somehow we survived as a species.
4. You want to associate your bed with sleeping, so avoid doing things such as reading, eating, or watching television in bed.
5. Make the place you sleep as comfortable as possible with regard to factors such as temperature, noise level, and comfort of your bed.
6. Avoid consuming liquids close to your bedtime, as this can cause trips to the bathroom at night.
7. Avoid substances that are stimulating such as caffeine, cold pills, and nicotine.
8. Do not use alcohol or sleeping pills as a means to get to sleep. While it may be helpful in getting off to sleep, it can disrupt the architecture of sleep. Chronic use of sleep aids can make things worse. Remember there is no such thing as sleeping pill deficiency as a cause of insomnia.
9. Don't be a "clock watcher"; turn it away so that you don't look at it through the night. Frequent clock watching can only lead to more frustration.

*Created from the University Counseling Service, The University of Iowa, 3223 Westlawn S, 52242-1100*