



# Sleep Problems

## **Are you having trouble sleeping?**

If you answered yes, you should discuss this with your doctor so that he/she can find the cause.

### **Some medical causes:**

- Illness, such as angina, diabetes, ulcers, congestive heart failure
- Pain
- Urinary tract infection
- Restless legs
- Depression
- Certain medications
- Breathing problems

If your doctor can not find a medical reason for your sleeping problems then there may be other causes.

### **Some other causes:**

- Too hot or cold in your bedroom.
- Change in environment.
- Too much time spent in bed at night.
- Too much daytime napping.
- Not enough exercise.
- Too much caffeine or alcohol.
- Hunger.
- Stress.
- TV in bedroom.

## **The following suggestions may help improve your sleeping problems without medication.**

- Get up and go to bed at the same time every day.
- Avoid taking naps during the day. If possible get outside for some fresh air everyday.
- Try increasing your activity a little but not after 6:00 in the evening.
- Decrease the amount of alcohol, caffeine and nicotine that you have each day. Try cutting them out completely several hours before bedtime.
- Do not use your bedroom for watching TV, eating and other activities.
- Keep your bedroom as comfortable and as quiet as possible.
- Do not eat large meals, but do not go to bed hungry. A small snack may be helpful.
- Before going to bed:
  - Try drinking a small cup of warm milk.
  - Do not drink a large amount of fluid.
  - Be sure to empty your bladder.
  - Enjoy an activity that you find relaxing.
- Try to leave the days problems at the bedroom door.
- Do not stay in bed tossing and turning. If you cannot sleep after 20 minutes or so get up until you feel sleepy again.

## **Sleeping Pills**

Keep these things in mind if you feel that you must take pills to help you sleep:

- You should see your doctor before taking any medication that you can buy without a prescription.
- Sleeping pills may be helpful for a while. They are not meant to be taken long term. Review their use regularly with your doctor or nurse.
- Sleeping pills can have serious side effects.
- Never stop taking sleeping pills on your own. Your doctor can suggest how you get off the medication slowly.

Remember that no pill can replace good sleep habits.

Sleep does not have to be disturbed just because you are getting older. Some changes in sleep are a normal part of aging but other sleeping problems are caused by poor sleep habits.

Try the suggestions in this pamphlet to improve your night-time sleep and daytime energy. If you have any questions about these suggestions, discuss them with your doctor or nurse.

**Looking for more health information?**

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazine articles and online health information.

For a list of public libraries in Nova Scotia go to [HTTP://publiclibraries.ns.ca](http://publiclibraries.ns.ca)

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