

6 Steps You Can Take to Sleep Now



I've had many requests from patients asking how they can improve their sleep. Now I am no sleep expert but I have come across a tried and tested method to readjust the body back to achieving a required amount of healthy sleep. I hope you find it helpful.

These next 6 steps are part of a sleep program that requires total commitment for 30 days. To attain optimum results, you need to go to bed at the same time every night and wake up at the same time every morning for the next 30 days, or it will not work. If you cannot commit to this, don't even bother with the program.

Before we outline the steps, you need to know a few things. The recommended "go to sleep" window is between 10pm to 12am(midnight), and no later. The recommended wake up time is 7-8 hours after you get into bed. You should not drink coffee or caffeinated beverages after 3pm. You may have a "bad" sleep night here and there with the program, but stick it out for the full 30 days. You owe it to yourself. If you work a night shift, please ignore the recommended "go to sleep" window. However, please note that working nights is detrimental to healthy sleep.

Step 1: Let your body know it's time to sleep

Develop a bedtime routine or ritual that involves at least 4 things your body can begin to associate with preparing for sleep (ie. brushing your teeth, changing into pajamas, tidying up your room, washing your face, etc.) The body needs signals to let it know that it's time to wind down and prepare for sleep. Going to bed is essentially closing down your day. If you go to bed with a cluttered mind, you will not be ready to sleep.

Step 2: Your bedroom is a sleep sanctuary

Do not watch TV or work on a computer in your bedroom. The bedroom should be a place that the body associates with sleep, not with brain stimulating activity. The bedroom is not a place to play, eat, or hang out. It should be for sleeping and sexual intimacy only. Your bedroom should be tidy and free from clutter, so as to send a calming message to your brain. Tidy Room=Tidy Mind=Tidy Sleep. It should have soft lighting, a cool, comfortable temperature and be dark when the lights are turned off.

Step 3: Do not lie awake in bed for more than 30 minutes if you cannot sleep.

If you feel yourself being frustrated or stressed out trying to sleep, leave the bedroom and do these 2 exercises:

1. Watch a late night program or simple movie or read a non-complicated magazine like a celebrity one. Nothing too brain stimulating or thought provoking. After about 15 minutes, you will feel ready to sleep and return back to the bedroom. If you still can't sleep do exercise #2.
2. Sit on the edge of your bed and let your arms flap down by your side. Let your shoulders stoop forward and hang your head slightly. (As you all know, this is not good posture but for the sake of good sleep, we will make an exception.) Breathe in deeply through your nose and hold your breath for 5 seconds. Now blow out slowly through your mouth. Repeat 10 times.

Step 4: Get out of bed at the same time every day.

This is the MOST IMPORTANT step as you MUST, regardless of what time you fall asleep, wake up at the same time EVERY DAY. It's tough in the beginning as you may get little sleep and feel tired the next day, but it's vital to give your body the routine required to reprogram your internal sleeping clock. Regardless of whether you have a day off work the next morning, you must wake up at the same time.

Step 5: No clock watching.

When you go to bed, set your alarm and then turn the clock around so it cannot be seen if you wake up during the night. When we clock watch, we start calculating how many hours of sleep we will get if we go off now or perhaps in 30 minutes time. These calculations heighten stress levels and they lessen our chances of a good night's sleep. It is, however, very important to use an alarm clock as it ensures we wake up at the same time every day and that we are on time for work. You must also set your alarm clock on the WEEKENDS in order to stick with the program.

Step 6: Do not stress or obsess about sleep

Do not obsess about sleep or think negative thoughts such as "I must sleep well tonight or I will pass out tomorrow". Instead, use powerful, positive affirmations such as "It's only one bad night, I will be fine." Bad sleep is as much psychological as it is physical. The less we sleep, the more we worry about not sleeping. When you have a bad night's sleep, just let it go and move on. Don't dwell on it.

Good luck with the program and please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.