Insomnia

Harvard Medical School I Division of Sleep Medicine I Sleep and Health Education

Healthy Sleep Hygiene

- ☐ **Identify and rid of barriers to restful sleep** such as caffeine, long naps, use of electronics at bedtime
- ☐ **Reduce time in bed awake** to increase sleepiness.
- ☐ **Stick to a sleep schedule**, even on the weekends.
  Bed time: _____ Wake Time: _____
- ☐ **Keep your bedroom for sleeping and intimacy**, do not work, watch TV, or eat in bed.
- ☐ **Do not watch the clock** to prevent anxiety or pressure to fall asleep.
- ☐ **Avoid caffeine and alcohol** close to bedtime.
- ☐ **Avoid smoking**, especially in the evening since nicotine often disturbs sleep.
- ☐ **Avoid greasy or "heavy" foods** close to bedtime but ensure your eating habits are regulated so hunger does not disturb your sleep.
- ☐ **Limit excessive fluid consumption** close to bedtime to limit the need for nighttime bathroom trips.
- ☐ **Get regular exercise** to improve sleep quality and increase sleepiness. It is best if you finish exercising at least two hours before bedtime. A hot shower or bath after exercise may further promote deep sleep.
- ☐ **Limit noise distractions** by sleeping in a well-insulated room or using ear plugs or a white noise source.
- ☐ **Keep your room dark and cool.** Use light-blocking curtains or eye covers, if needed.
- ☐ **Restrict your time in bed** to only the amount of sleep you need to feel refreshed the next day and limit fragmented, shallow sleep. On average, adults require 7.5-8 hours of sleep each night.
- ☐ **Reserve an hour before bedtime** to wind down. Put away electronic devices and engage in relaxing, restful activities like reading or meditation.
- ☐ **Do not take problems to bed.** If you need time to process your thoughts or plan the next day, reserve 15-30 minutes beforehand to make a "worry list" or "To Do list" to address after a restful slumber.
- ☐ **If you are having difficulty falling asleep, get out of bed.** When you try harder to fall asleep, it often makes it more frustrating and difficult to do so. Leave the bedroom and do something relaxing like reading in dim light. Return to bed only once you feel sleepy and wake up at your usual wake time.

Remember these recommendations are to help promote good sleep. If you have a sleeping disorder like insomnia, then implementing this healthy sleep hygiene alone may not treat your condition. Make sure to discuss your concerns with your doctor.