

# TROUBLE SLEEPING?

## The ABC's of ZZZ's

- Do you often take more than 30 minutes to fall asleep?
- Do you wake up frequently or too early with difficulty falling back to sleep?
- Do you feel groggy and lethargic when you awaken or drowsy, irritable, or unable to concentrate during the day?

If you answered YES to any of these questions, you may have “sleep debt” and you’re not alone. 60% of American adults experience sleep problems.

### **Why is lack of sleep a problem?**

Sleep is not merely a “time out” from our busy routines; it is essential for good health, mental and emotional functioning and safety. Sleep lays the groundwork for a productive day ahead. Chronic insomniacs (those lacking sleep) are more likely to develop psychiatric problems, and are more likely to make greater use of health care due to increased physical and mental conditions. Insufficient sleep can also be extremely dangerous, leading to serious and fatal accidents.

### **What are the biggest “sleep stealers”?**

- *STRESS* - school, job relationship
- *LIFESTYLE STRESSORS* – alcohol, caffeine, timing of exercise, irregular schedules
- *SHIFT WORK* - “biological rhythms” get confused
- *ENVIRONMENTAL* - temperature, lighting, bedding, difference in roommate or bed partner sleep preferences or patterns
- *MEDICATIONS* - can contribute to sleeping difficulties
- *HORMONAL* - women’s cyclic or menopausal hormonal changes

### **How to help yourself to a good night’s sleep**

- *EXERCISE REGULARLY* – finish workout at least three hours before bedtime
- *CAFFEINE, FOOD AND FLUIDS HIGH IN SUGAR AND SALT, NICOTINE, AND ALCOHOL* – should be avoided before bedtime. Can delay or interrupt sleep. Also avoid a large meal and restrict fluids before bed. Foods high in the amino acid tryptophan may help you sleep, i.e. milk and bananas

- *BEDTIME ROUTINES* – keep regular sleep times and establish relaxing rituals to unwind “signaling” to your brain that it’s time to sleep, i.e, warm bath, light reading
- *USE BED FOR SLEEPING AND INTIMACY ONLY* – not as an office or for watching TV
- *DON’T TOSS AND TURN* - only go to bed when tired, if not able to fall asleep within 15-30 minutes, don’t continue to toss and turn. Get out, engage yourself in a relaxing activity, such as listening to music or reading until you feel sleepy. Remember: try to clear your mind; don’t use this time to solve your daily problems
- *ENVIRONMENT* – consider temperature, humidity, lighting, noise, mattress and bedding comfort
- *NAPPING* – may interfere with your 24 hr biological clock, naps taken late in the day may interfere with your sleep onset in evening.
- *MEDICATIONS* - avoid medications in the evening that have known side effects of affecting sleep, such as many commonly used decongestants
- *SLEEP DIARY* – keeping a detailed diary of contributing factors affecting sleep, contact Counseling and Health Center for details

### **When to Seek Help**

If your sleep problems persist for longer than a week and are bothersome, or if sleepiness interferes with your daily functioning, contact a health care provider for further assistance.

Call the Counseling and Health Center at 465-2380