

# **INSOMNIA: hints**

**by Dr. Van Beveren**

Many of you don't know how to sleep. Insomnia is rampant in the USA and while it will affect all of us at sometime - there are way too many in which insomnia is affecting us ALL the time. Remember that we are just cavemen underneath all this modern veneer. Below are some common sense guidelines that may help.

Do not watch television before you sleep – adventure and action movies are worse. Read about an hour before you want to fall asleep. Make up in your mind what time you want to fall asleep and slowly, over time, the mind will listen to you. Do not eat 3 hours before sleeping because that will keep the mind awake. Only take the supplements one hour before sleep with a little water. The number one problem with sleep is the wrong diet – too much acid foods which has to be slowly changed to an alkaline diet. No caffeinated beverages – ever.

The number of conditions which interfere with sleep are numerous but some are more outstanding than others: thyroidal congestion, urinary disorders, reflux esophagitis, hiatus hernia, anxiety problems, depression, asthma, gallbladder problems, mental disorders, etc.

There are a wide range of medications that interfere with sleep and I don't have time to name them all. Usually it's medication that is designed to put you into a coma in very large doses. Some can even kill you.

Beginning an exercise program that ends about 2 hours before you fall asleep can be very helpful to some. Sedentary people commonly experience difficulty sleeping due to inadequate physical activity. On the other hand there may be some who over train and the mind cannot slow down fast enough to sleep.

Athletes often experience this when they train too close to sleep time. Same thing with shift work. Night shifts, rotating shifts that interfere with solar rhythms may be the culprit and we found that exposing workers to extra bright lights for the first four hours on the first over night shift adjusts workers' clocks to the new schedule almost instantly.

Anxiety or depression leads to fatigue and then exhaustion which can aggravate both anxiety or

depression. Exercise is often much more helpful than drugs.

Inadequate or improper light exposure can contribute to sleep difficulty. Lack of adequate sunlight in winter months contributes to SAD – a form of depression due to lack of light and characterized by a “waking” sleep. Full-spectrum light treatment is often indicated and people are urged to spend time outdoors with at least their face and hands exposed to the sun. The very fast flickering of fluorescent lights, such as those used in corporate offices, hospitals, schools, government offices, etc. cause irritability that influence and interfere with sleep.

Nutritional deficiencies may alter sleep patterns. Magnesium is one of those as the muscle cells are unable to depolarize as they should – and therefore remain rigid – often resulting in cramps or stiffness in the morning. Copper deficiency or excess may cause insomnia as well as those with low iron. Chemical exposure is a huge problem these days – not only to those that work with chemicals all day but also wives and mothers who are exposed to domiciliary chemicals, anti-biotic cleaning fluids and solvents.

Here are some rules for a great sleep:

Remove as many electrical devices from the bedroom as possible. These include TV's, radios, answering machines, electrical clocks, lamps computers, VCR's, etc. and keep them out of the bedroom. Ionization type smoke detectors (which give off radio-active material) can ruin your sleep if they are located in the bedroom. This is one of the reasons many people can't get a good night sleep in a hotel room. The damaging effects can be as far away as 50 feet. Some believe (John Ott) that they may cause impotence as flowers wilt almost immediately when near. Many of these things don't belong in a dark, sleeping room anyway. Even unplugged some of them can cause problems – especially the TV. Sleep at least six feet from any electrical outlet. There is a device which can make life simpler called the “demand switch” – which automatically cuts the flow of electricity to the bedroom when there is no demand. Its purpose is to eliminate any hint of electricity while you're sleeping.

Avoid metal spring mattresses and water beds – like sleeping under a high tension wire. For the best sleep locate a source which sells natural mattresses made with rye-straw, cotton or some other fiber. Metal spring conduct vibrations that may keep the sensitive awake.

Another alternative is a futon. Many use these and get a wonderful night sleep. Be careful, as

some futons contain recycled plastic on the inside. Don't get this kind. Same with synthetic pillows, wall-paper, paint, etc. The bedroom should be as natural as the caves we used to sleep in. But much more comfortable of course!

Avoid metal bed frames and instead choose wood. Metal frames often carry damaging electromagnetic fields. Remove all metal boxes, typewriters and wires from under your bed.

Please don't use electric blankets. These are dangerous from all angles. And electric blanket can surround you with no less than 76,000 millivolts when your body is designed to carry only 1. Better to use down, flannel or cotton comforters.

Avoid synthetic carpets in the bedrooms. These can ruin the air you breathe. Use all natural products which now are much easier to find than in the past. Do not use a back or padding which is synthetic such as plastic, foam rubber or latex. Jute backing is best for allowing the carpet to breathe and not place deteriorating toxic gasses in the air while you're sleeping.

OPEN YOUR WINDOW AT NIGHT. Even if its just a few inches during the winter. This is the cheapest and most efficient way to get fresh air and negative ions in the room. Some newer homes are almost suffocating with all the chemicals which abound. Heat drives out the healthy oxygen. Keep the room as cold as possible without affecting your sleep.

Never stay in bed longer than you sleep. When you're awake – get up. Even if it's at 4-5 am. Students do better studying in the morning without telephones or other disturbances than late at night when they are in their most tired state. Curtailing the time in bed seems to solidify sleep.; excessively long times in bed seems related to fragmented and shallow sleep.

A regular arousing time in the morning strengthens the circadian cycling and leads to regular times of sleep onset. Get up and go to bed at the same time every night – even weekends when possible. A daily steady amount of exercise deepens sleep.

The "occasional exercise" habit does not necessarily improve sleep the following night. Loud noises like snoring, planes, clock ticking, etc. disturb sleep even in people who do not awaken and cannot remember noises at night. Sound attenuated bedrooms may help those whose audio equipment needs to sleep close to noise. Excessively warm rooms disturb sleep but there is no

evidence that a cold room solidifies sleep. Alcohol helps people fall asleep but the sleep is fragmented and they often wake up with a hangover – no matter how slight and unnoticeable. People who go to bed angry or frustrated should meditate before sleeping. Tryptophan, 5-HTP, teas (hops, passiflora, valerian, chamomile) and other commercially made herbal concoctions sipped or swallowed an hour before normal bed-times are often helpful. Magnesium orotate improves sleep as mentioned before.

Hope this helps.

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