

# SUGGESTIONS TO HELP YOU SLEEP

## IF YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY SLEEPING, TRY:

- a **hot** bath before bed
- a **warm** drink (doesn't have to be milk, can be anything not caffeinated. A herbal tea, such as "sleepy-time tea", is good)
- a "winding down" time of about 20 minutes after studying - could be the hot bath, music, light reading
- in bed, muscle relaxation exercise

## DURING THE DAY:

### Exercise

Slow jogging, swimming, and Hatha yoga can all help you to relax. Always allow your body to "warm down" after exercise.

### Nutrition

Eat slowly, avoid refined carbohydrates (white breads, sugary foods, fried foods) and reduce caffeine intake (coffee, coke, strong tea). Too much alcohol makes you tired, but disrupts your sleep.

### Planning

To get things off your mind at the end of the day, plan ahead and make lists, instead of attempting to memorise what you must do tomorrow. This can clear your mind for sleep.

### Suggested pre-sleep plan

- Finish studying
- Make list and pack bag ready for tomorrow
- Warm drink/hot bath
- Get into bed
- Systematically relax muscles. Realise there is nothing further you need to do today, you have "put the day to rest"

## FURTHER PRACTICAL HINTS FOR BETTER SLEEP

### GENERAL ISSUES

- Curtail and regularise bedtime: Most insomniacs stay in bed too long and/or get up too late in the morning after a poor night
- Schedule "worry time" early in the evening if you find that you reminisce at night
- Learn deep relaxation procedures if you tense up when bedtime approaches or when you feel unable to fall asleep
- Keep yourself fit even if tired from insomnia; healthy bodies seem to sleep better than unfit ones

- Curtail alcohol, coffee, cola, tea, especially in the afternoon or evening or discontinue them altogether if you seem sensitive to them
- Explore total insomnia by occasionally keeping yourself awake for an entire night. Notice how you can still function the next day
- Explore changes in other habits and observe what they do to your sleep (smoking, going out at night, evening walk, etc.)

## **ENVIRONMENT**

- Noise: Consider noise reduction environments or a noise screen if you are bothered by noise, or the use of ear plugs (the foam rubber ones are cheap and effective)
- Temperature: Explore what temperature allows you to sleep best
- Bed: Explore where you sleep well (some people sleep best on the floor).

## **BEDTIME RULES**

- Experiment with only going to bed when tired, not because the clock says you should. (If this doesn't work, try a 'Sleep Routine' - for more information on this, see a Counsellor.)
- Try to stay awake in bed as long as possible while reading a pleasant but not too exciting book. Let sleep overpower you; do not try to force sleep
- Use sleeping medication sparingly, no more than once or twice per week at the most
- Try a light bedtime snack, e.g. a glass of warm milk

## **DURING THE NIGHT AND IN THE MORNING**

- Should you awaken at night, try to remain in bed, relaxed. Let yourself fall asleep again
- Should you feel yourself becoming tense and frustrated, it is time to do something else, such as reading, getting up for some time at a quiet hobby, etc. Then follow the bedtime rules
- No matter how poor the night, have an alarm clock awaken you at a regular, predetermined time. This is the most crucial rule of them all. Never oversleep because of a poor night

## **DURING THE DAY, AFTER A SLEEPLESS NIGHT**

- Keep busy, if possible with tasks that require gross body movements. For example, organising your filing cabinet and bookshelf
- Explore naps. If they help you sleep the next night, it is okay to take them. If they hurt sleep during the following night, avoid them, no matter how tempting

