

Six Habits That Lead to Bad Sleep

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Last Reviewed 01/28/2013

Let's face it, few things are as frustrating as tossing and turning, looking at the clock as another hour goes by—and wishing (and wishing) for a sound night's sleep. But quite frankly, there are a lot of things that we do to rob ourselves of sound slumber.



In fact, here are six surefire ways to bring on insomnia...

1. **Keep lights on in your room and watch TV in bed.** Light exposure at night disrupts the production of the sleep hormone melatonin—and you don't even need to see the light in order to be affected by it. So, if you want to ensure you won't rest, watch TV as you fall asleep...or better yet, keep a light on. In all seriousness, a low-watt night-light in an adjacent bathroom is acceptable, but when you are ready to go to sleep all other lights (and the TV) should be off and the shades should be drawn.
2. **Give no thought to the temperature your bedroom.** If you want to sleep soundly you need to keep your body temperature steady. Otherwise you will likely wake up in the middle of the night feeling too hot or too cold, and you may have trouble falling back to sleep. We get the best night's sleep when we keep our bedroom cool and wear cotton pajamas which help to wick away moisture.
3. **Sleep with a snoring bed partner.** Everyone sleeps better when it's quiet. If you have a hard time sleeping because of noise disturbances you can't control—such as street noise or a snoring bedmate—then you may want to consider using ear plugs. Another good solution is to use a white noise machine that blocks out sound and lulls you into a deep slumber.
4. **Read, use your laptop, and watch TV in bed.** The truth is you shouldn't use your bed for anything except sleep and sex. If you spend significant time watching TV, reading, or just loitering in bed, your body won't take the cue that “bed” equals “sleep.”
5. **Drink alcohol and caffeine late in the day.** Both alcohol and caffeine can keep you awake. If you're especially sensitive to caffeine, you want to avoid caffeinated beverages any time after noon. As for alcohol, one glass might relax you—but any more can interfere with your ability to fall and stay asleep. The closer to bedtime, the greater the effect.
6. **Have a snack before bed.** If you eat right before bed, your stomach is still working hard to digest that meal when you are trying to nod off. Try to avoid eating 2–3 hours prior to bedtime.

Obviously, this is tongue in cheek. If you want to get a sound night's sleep, you want to do exactly the opposite of all of this “advice.”

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Date : 20. 02. 2013