

POSITIVE SLEEP HABITS

Difficulty falling and staying asleep is one of the most common problems that individuals with chronic pain experience. Sleep can be disturbed by pain, the medication used to treat pain, and the stress of living with chronic pain. Sometimes how individuals respond to the lack of sleep—such as taking naps, resting in bed during the day, drinking extra coffee, and/or worrying about the lack of sleep—makes the problem worse.

The following guidelines can establish positive sleep habits and increase the likelihood of gaining more sleep despite the presence of pain. It is important to follow these guidelines consistently and be willing to give them some time to work.

Sleep Restriction to Promote Better Sleep Efficiency

1. Keep track of your sleep for a week and find your average total sleep time.
2. Establish a bed time and wake up time that is equal to your total sleep time. For example, if your average sleep time was 5 hours, then set your bed time at 11:00 PM and your wake-up time at 4:00 AM, or your bed time at 12:00 PM and your wake-up time at 5:00 PM.
3. If your total sleep time is less than 5 hours, still set your total time in bed to be 5 hours.
4. Stick with your bed time and wake-up time until you are able to sleep 90% of the time during this total time in bed (this is your sleep efficiency). This will take time. You need to be consistent and persistent.
5. Outside of this total time in bed stay out of the bed and bedroom during the day (the only exception is for romance).
6. Once your sleep efficiency is 90% for a week or more then you can add 15 minutes at a time to either your bedtime or wake-up time. Do this for a week and when your sleep efficiency remains 90% you can add another 15 minutes and so on.
7. Over time some people will be able to increase their total sleep time more than others, this is normal. Some people just sleep more than others. Be at peace with whatever increase in total sleep time you can accomplish.

Follow These Habits to Promote Your Sleep Rehabilitation

1. Avoid naps and nodding off during the day
2. Exercise regularly, but not right before bed.
3. Get at least 30 minutes of natural light every day.
4. Create a comfortable bedroom environment.
5. Eliminate or limit caffeine intake.
6. Limit your alcohol and do not drink 3 hours before bedtime.
7. Go to bed neither too hungry or too full.
8. Wind down and engage in relaxing activity for 1-2 hours before bed.
9. Turn off electronic devices (e.g., phones, tablets, readers, computers) an hour before bedtime.
10. Dim the lights an hour before bedtime.
11. If you worry at night when not sleeping, then schedule a time early in the day to worry.
12. Try not to be upset over the problem. The more we worry about poor sleep, the more problems we have.

If you want to learn more, get this book and follow the guidelines

End The Insomnia Struggle: A Step-by-Step Guide to Help You Get to Sleep and Stay Asleep by Ehrnstrom and Brosse.