

## **Better Sleep for Better Health**

*Do you have trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, wake up too early?*

*Do you sleep too much?*

\*All of these sleep problems can negatively impact your lifestyle and your health.

\*Likewise, lifestyle choices and health problems can negatively impact your sleep!

**WHAT** is considered a good night's sleep?

\***7-8 hours** of uninterrupted sleep per night, is recommended for optimum health and daytime functioning. This may vary with individual activity level and lifestyle. Some people can get by with 6 hours whereas some people need 9 hours to feel their best.

**HOW** do you know if you're getting a good night's sleep?

\*You'll be sleeping through the night

\*You'll wake easily in the morning

\*You'll feel rested and alert during the day without an excess of caffeine.

**WHAT** are some common sleep problems?

\***Sleeping too much** (called *hypersomnia*): sleeping more than 9 hours per night and still having difficult waking in the morning and/or staying awake during the day.

\***Difficulty falling asleep**: Taking longer than 30 minutes to fall asleep at night.

\***Difficulty staying asleep**: Waking during the night with (or without) nightmares, and having difficulty falling back to sleep.

\***Waking early in the morning**: Waking up 3-4 hours before you normally wake up.

**WHAT** causes sleep problems?

\*Health problems and lifestyle choices can cause sleep problems. Here are a few common culprits:

-**Caffeine** in large amounts throughout the day (more than 2 8 ounce cups of coffee!)

-**Stimulant Medication** (i.e. some OTC allergy medications contain pseudoephedrine, which is a stimulant. Check with your doctor.)

-**Alcohol!** Drinking alcohol before bed can cause interrupted sleep and poor sleep quality.

-**Stress!** A stressful lifestyle can negatively impact sleep due to worry about past and future events at bedtime.

-**Chronic pain** due to health problems. Check with your doctor about ways to manage chronic pain.

-**Psychiatric Conditions**: some mood disorders (depression & bipolar disorder) & anxiety disorders can disrupt sleep. Seeing a therapist to address these concerns is necessary.

\*SEE THE BACK OF THIS HANDOUT FOR WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP!

## **Better Sleep for Better Health (Cont.)**

**WHAT** can I do to improve my sleep?

\*See your doctor to address health and/or psychiatric problems that are disrupting your sleep. If other lifestyle choices are the problem, here are some simple solutions!

1. Identify personal barriers to getting a good night's sleep. Take a look at your lifestyle and health, and experiment with making some of the following changes as they apply to your sleep problem.
2. Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep? Don't drink caffeine and/or take stimulant medications (if possible) after 4pm
3. Decide on a bedtime & waking time, and stick to it whenever possible. This is useful to improve your sleep, no matter what sleep problem you are experiencing. It programs your body to a sleep/wake cycle.
4. Don't do anything in bed except sleep and have sex (anything else will associate your bed with other activities and potentially disrupt sleep). Nobody wants to think about work or school while in bed!
5. Don't toss and turn for more than 30 minutes. Get up, do something relaxing, then return to bed. Repeat until you fall asleep. Use this technique if you have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep.
6. Create a bedtime routine that is relaxing. This may include tea, reading something non-stressful, and deep breathing while lying in bed on your stomach.
7. Incorporate an exercise routine into your day. Regular exercise promotes healthy sleep habits. Exercise can help if you are sleeping too much or having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.
  - \*Some people find that evening exercising promotes falling asleep, whereas some people find that exercise before bed disrupts their sleep. Experiment with the time of day that works best for you!