Dealing with Sleep Problems in Recovery

Sleep problems are very common during early recovery. You may have trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep. You may wake during the night or early in the morning. You may feel tired or fall asleep during the day. These problems may come and go while your body heals and often stop after a few months.

To help you relax and sleep better:

- Take time before bed to relax. Read, write in your journal or do some deep breathing and relaxation exercises.
- Take a hot bath or shower 30 to 60 minutes before bedtime.
- If you do not fall asleep after 15 to 20 minutes, get up and go to another room. Do something relaxing, such as reading or listening to music. Go back to bed when you feel sleepy.
- Set a regular bedtime and wake up time each day, including weekends.
- Avoid naps during the day.
- Exercise each day in the morning or afternoon. Avoid exercising in the evening; it can make it hard for you to relax at bedtime.
- Do not go to bed too full or too hungry. Eat a light snack with protein before bed, such as cheese, peanut butter, or yogurt. Avoid sugary, high carbohydrate foods at bedtime.
- Limit caffeine each day and avoid caffeine after 6:00 PM.
- Limit the fluids you drink before bedtime.
- Stop smoking or other tobacco use. Nicotine effects can limit your ability to relax.
- Keep your bed as a place to sleep and have sex. Do not eat, write, watch TV or talk on the phone while in bed.
- Keep your bedroom dark, quiet, and cool to help you sleep.
- Place your clock out of sight to avoid anxiety about the time.

Do not take any over-the-counter sleep medicines. These medicines will add to your sleep problem. You may take synthetic Melatonin (a 1 milligram dose) about 30 minutes before bedtime.

If you follow these tips and still have sleeping problems, talk to your doctor or counselor.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.
For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or e-mail health-info@osu.edu.

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