

SLEEP-WAKE CYCLE MANAGEMENT



DIFFICULTY SLEEPING: A COMMON PROBLEM

- Depression disturbs sleep and disrupts the body clock.
- Sleeplessness may lead to feelings of irritability, lack of energy, and poor concentration.
- It is not the total length of sleep that matters but the quality of deep sleep and dream sleep.
- Most deep sleep occurs during the first five hours of the night. Even if you only sleep for four or five hours, you will still get about the same amount of deep sleep as someone who sleeps for eight to 10 hours.

If you answered 'YES' to one or more of the boxes below, you may find 'SLEEP-WAKE CYCLE MANAGEMENT' helpful.
For more than two weeks:

1. Have you been tired all the time?	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
2. Have you been spending more time in bed?	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
3. Have you had poor quality or fewer hours of sleep?	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
4. Have you been napping during the day?	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
5. Have you cut down on physical activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES

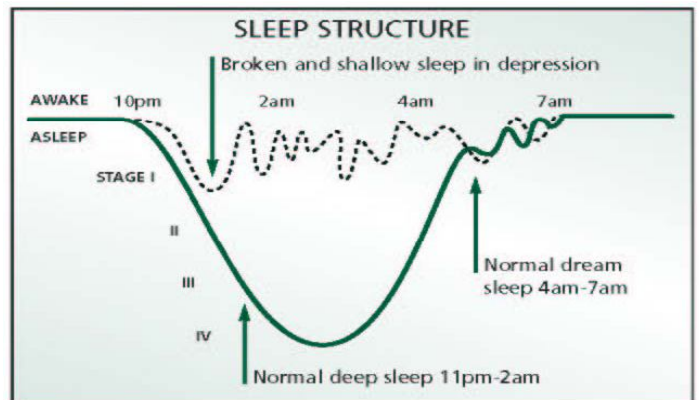
MANAGING YOUR SLEEP-WAKE CYCLE

Depression usually leads to:

- Difficulty getting to sleep;
- Poor quality sleep;
- Fewer hours of sleep;
- More awakenings during the night;
- In severe cases, waking very early in the morning and being unable to get back to sleep; and,
- Daytime tiredness.

Poor quality deep sleep leads to:

- Daytime fatigue;
- Poor concentration;
- Irritability;
- Musculo-skeletal aches and pains;
- Reduced immune function; and,
- Prolonged depression.



THE BODY CLOCK

- Humans, like all other mammals, have a built in 24-hour 'body clock'.
- This clock sets up a 24-hour cycle of hormones (circadian rhythm) that gives us enough energy to work through the day, and good sleep at night to recover from the day. That is, sleep and wakefulness are the two sides of the same coin: unless you are mentally and physically active during the day you cannot sleep at night. If you sleep poorly, you will wake up feeling unrefreshed.
- When we are young the body clock is very robust. As we grow older we become dependent on signals from the environment (eg. sunlight, physical activity).
- The clock can also be disrupted by physical illness, infections, pain during the night and psychological stress.
- It is critical to maintain a regular pattern of sleep and physical activity to keep the clock ticking over regularly.
- Restoring your sleep-wake cycle is essential for full recovery.

Source: Hickie et al. Educational Health Solutions; 2000. Reproduced with permission [<http://www.spheregp.com.au>]

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HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP

There are a number of things you can do to improve your sleep. These include:

When you wake up:

- Get out of bed as soon as you wake up - do not go back to sleep or try to make up for 'lost sleep';
- Try to get up at about the same time each morning, approximately 7:00-7.30am;
- Go outside into the sun (no sunglasses!); and,
- Do some physical activity, like walking to get the newspaper.

During the day:

- Do not nap. If you nap, you will be less tired when you go to bed, and will probably take longer to fall asleep;
- If you are worrying about things during the night, set aside some time for problem solving during the day. Identify problems that are causing you stress and solve them using **structured problem solving**;
- Keep a sleep-wake diary;
- Review your sleep-wake progress with your doctor at each visit; and,
- Try to be active in the early morning or late afternoon - it helps to set your body's daily clock.

Late afternoon:

- Avoid drinking caffeine after about 4:00pm, and try not to drink more than two cups of caffeine type drinks each day (eg. coffee, strong tea, cola); and,
- Be active while the sun is up.

Before going to bed:

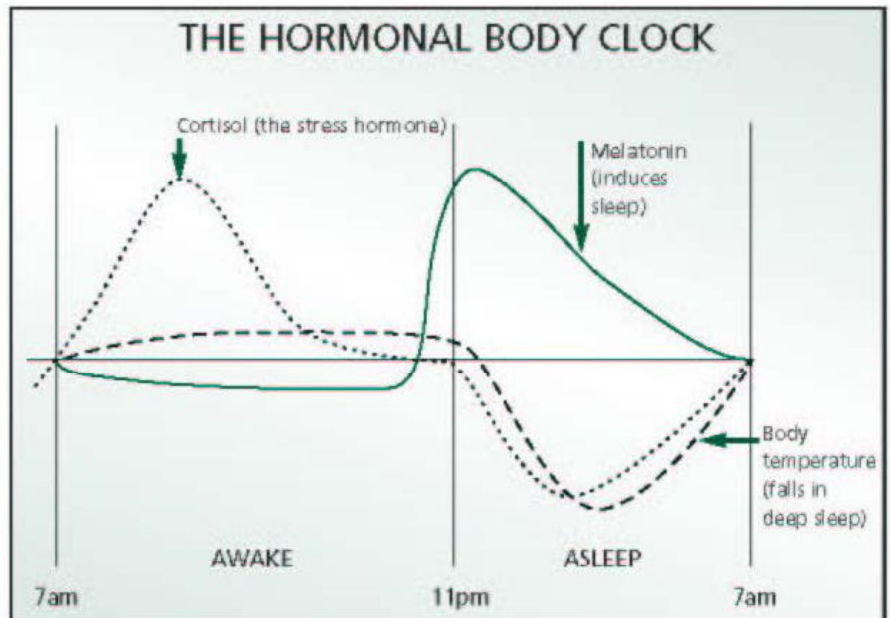
- Avoid going to bed too early - it is not the right time for deep sleep;
- Go to bed at approximately 10:00-10:30pm;
- Avoid using alcohol to help you sleep. As the alcohol is broken down in your body, it causes you to sleep less deeply and to awaken more frequently;
- Do not smoke within an hour or two of going to bed. Smoking stimulates your nervous system;
- Do not go to bed hungry or with a full bladder;
- Regular exercise can improve your sleep, but avoid vigorous exercise late in the evening;
- Allow yourself time to wind down before going to bed. If you are working or studying, stop at least 30 minutes before bedtime and do something relaxing in this time;
- Use your bed only for sleep and sex! Avoid reading or watching television in bed because by the time you turn off the light, your body may be restless since it has already been lying in bed for a while; and,
- Avoid taking sleeping pills. If you do need to take sleeping pills, try not to take them for longer than a week because they can be addictive.

While you sleep:

- Try to make your bedroom quiet, dim, and cool; and,
- Avoid too many blankets and electric blankets - if you are too hot you do not go into a deep sleep. You will also have more nightmares.

Overcoming long-term problems with getting to sleep:

- For some people, problems with getting to sleep may endure for weeks, months, or even years. Not surprisingly, this may lead to anxiety about getting to sleep, which in turn makes sleep problems even worse. These people may need to take specific steps to break the cycle of feeling anxious and restless in bed.



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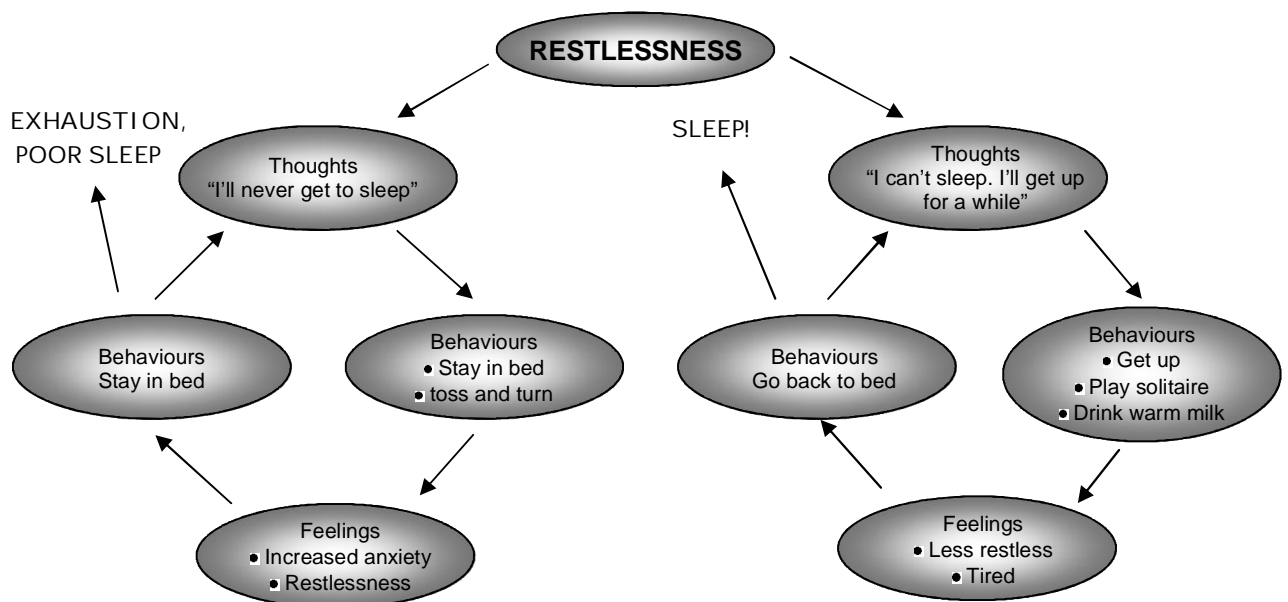


HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP (CONTINUED)

Steps to follow when you cannot fall asleep:

- Get up if you cannot sleep after trying for 15 to 20 minutes. Staying in bed when you are feeling restless and anxious is unlikely to result in sleep;
- Do something quiet and distracting (eg. cards, reading, jigsaw, knitting, warm bath). If your mind is very active or you are worrying about problems in your life, it may be helpful to engage in an activity that requires some degree of mental effort (eg. a crossword). By distracting yourself from your worries, you may find it easier to wind down and become sleepy;
- Go back to bed when you feel more relaxed and sleepy; and,
- If you are still awake after a further 15 to 20 minutes of trying to sleep, get out of bed again. Repeat this process until you fall asleep shortly after returning to bed.

- Over the space of a few nights you should find that it becomes a bit easier to get to sleep because you have started to break the cycle of being restless in bed.
- Although you may end up spending fewer hours in bed, you will hopefully be asleep for most of the time you are in bed, rather than tossing-and-turning.



MORE INFORMATION

Learn about other coping strategies for depression and anxiety:

- [beyondblue fact sheet - Physical activity management](#)
- [beyondblue fact sheet - Reducing alcohol and other drugs](#)

Learn about other treatments for depression and anxiety:

- [beyondblue fact sheet - Cognitive and other psychological therapies](#)
- [beyondblue fact sheet - Why do I need to take antidepressant drugs?](#)
- [beyondblue fact sheet - Alternative treatments](#)

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