Getting Better Sleep

Sleep issues are frequently worsened after COVID. Using good sleep habits can provide solutions for improving your sleep over the long term.

Try these strategies before using medication treatment.

Establish and maintain a routine:

1. **Get regular.** Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends and days off. This regular rhythm will make you feel better and will give your body a pattern to remember.

2. **Keep your daytime routine the same.** Even if you have a bad night's sleep and are tired, it is important that you try to keep your daytime activities the same as you had planned.

3. **Create sleep rituals.** Having a routine can help your body know that it is time to sleep. Examples of nighttime routines might include relaxing stretches, breathing exercises, drinking caffeine-free tea, or taking a warm bath 1-2 hours before bedtime.

Use a sleep diary: Monitoring your sleep/wake times can help you identify patterns, including what you could have done differently that could affect your sleep quality. You could use a handwritten journal, smart watch, or cell phone app (such as "Sleep Cycle").

Sleep only when sleepy: If you haven't been able to get to sleep after about 20 minutes or more, get up and do something calming or boring until you feel sleepy, then return to bed and try again.

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Prepare the location for sleep:

1. **Bed is for sleeping!** Try not to use your bed for anything other than sleeping and sex, so that your body comes to associate bed with sleep.

2. **Make it comfortable.** It is very important that your bed and bedroom are quiet and relaxing for sleeping. A cooler room with enough blankets to stay warm is best. Have curtains or an eye mask to block out early morning light. Use earplugs or a sound machine if there is noise outside your room.

Eating and drinking for a successful sleep:

1. **Avoid caffeine & nicotine for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed.** Many people believe that alcohol is relaxing and helps them to get to sleep at first, but it interrupts the quality of sleep.

2. **Eat right, but not too late.** A healthy, balanced diet will help you to sleep well. Timing is also important. Avoid a very empty stomach at bedtime as this can be distracting. A heavy meal soon before bed can interrupt sleep. A warm glass of milk, which contains tryptophan, can act as a natural sleep inducer.

Exercise regularly: Frequent physical activity is a good idea to help with good sleep. However, try not to do strenuous exercise within 4 hours before bedtime as this can make getting to sleep more difficult.

If these approaches don't work, consider speaking with your provider about other strategies including medication options.