



Enhance Your Sleep & Wellness

Many of us may be experiencing increased stress and anxiety associated with our pandemic. The challenges that we have had to endure with the uncertainties associated with Covid-19 and the disruptions to our normal routines may have also disrupted our sleep patterns, causing difficulties falling asleep, frequent awakenings and in some cases an absence of sleep. You may be experiencing co-occurring symptoms such as racing thoughts, feeling on edge, physical tension, distractibility and headaches. Increased stress may not only disrupt our quality of sleep, it may also exacerbate pre-existing sleep difficulties, as increased stress hormones are released in the body. Inadequate sleep may weaken your immune system and it has been linked with increased heart disease, compromised immune system, memory impairment, risk for obesity, and increased risk for depression and anxiety. Consider the following strategies to help you manage your stress levels and improve your sleep:

- Limit exposure to media outlets, particularly prior to going to bed. Overexposure to the negative aspects of any crisis can exacerbate existing levels of stress and anxiety.
- Maintain a consistent bedtime routine as much as possible. Strive to go to bed and awaken at the same time each day.
- Make bedroom conducive for sleep activity. Use bedroom and bed for sleep and avoid using as a workspace.
- Limit napping in the daytime especially if you normally have insomnia issues.
- Limit caffeine, nicotine and alcohol use, particularly close to bed.
- Avoid lying in bed excessively. Get out of bed upon awakening in the morning. Get up and engage in low stimulus activity if you can't fall asleep within 30 minutes.
- Avoid eating heavy meals before bedtime. Limit food intake to light snacking after dinner time.
- Schedule calming time before bedtime for relaxation measures such as reading, soaking in tub, listening to soothing music.
- Strive to maintain structure in the day and engage in regular exercise. Most people have problems sleeping if they exercise too close to bedtime.
- Consider the following Apps to assist with establishing good sleep hygiene: Dream EZ; CBT-I Coach.

HelpPeople Counselors are available for additional assistance with managing stress and sleep difficulties. Contact HelpPeople EAP at 315-470-7447 or by email @ helppeople-eap.org.