Sleep Checklist

When we struggle to get a good night sleep it can affect everything in our day to day life. Below you will find some guidelines to help generate a good night's sleep. Research has suggested that the guidelines below can provide a long-term solution to difficulties with sleep.

Eliminate naps: avoid napping throughout the day. To begin with, this can be difficult and when your body is tired you may wish to make the most of an opportunity to get some sleep. Avoiding napping means you should be tired by bedtime. If you feel the need to nap, research suggests a nap of 40 minutes to be the best time.

Caffeine: If you are struggling to sleep it can be helpful to track your caffeine intake. Avoiding caffeine 2-4 hours before bedtime as it acts a stimulant affecting the quality of your sleep.

Bed: We learn by association and over time your body needs to associate bed with sleep. Avoid watching TV, reading, browsing on your phone when you are in bed.

Sleep Diary: Use a sleep diary to track your sleep, doing this will allow you to measure changes in your sleep. You may notice things that impact on your sleep.

Relax: In the hour before you go to bed, develop a routine. Taking a bath, reading or listening to relaxing music.

Screen time: Try to limit screen time in the 20 minutes-1 hour before you go to bed. The bright light from Tv, phone and tablet all stimulate your mind.

15-minute rule: If you are not able to get to sleep research recommends getting out of bed 15-20 minutes after you go to bed. Tossing and turning does not allow your body to learn the connection between sleep and bed. Try reading a book, some mindful colouring in or listening to some relaxing music, then when you feel tired, return to bed.

Environment: If you have made several changes to your routine and notice you still struggle to sleep, pay attention to your environment. The room temperature, your bedding and the cleanliness of the room.

Exercise: regular exercise will improve both your sleep and overall health. 30 minutes exercise in day is ideal, this can be a walk to the shops, picking the kids up from school or on your way to university. If you have an iPhone, the health app tracks your daily steps. 10,000 is the recommended number of steps and you can set reminders to help you reach your target.

Based on research from Stepanski, E. J., & Wyatt, J. K. (2003). Use of sleep hygiene in the treatment of insomnia. Sleep medicine reviews, 7(3), 215-225.

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