Practical Tips to Improve Sleep

The stress and uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted our daily routines and brought with it a host of new challenges that impact how we feel and manage our days. Many of us struggle with unexpected changes at work, shelter-in-place measures, home schooling, and, of course, worries about our health and the health of our loved ones. These challenges often disturb our sleep patterns and affect our physical and emotional well-being. Sustained loss of sleep is known to affect our mood, memory, general health, and ability to concentrate and make decisions.

Fortunately, there are a number of ways to improve sleep during these difficult times. Here are some suggestions to help:

Suggested Daily Practice

Create an optimal sleep environment: Use your bed for sleep and sexual activity only, and make sure your sleep environment is quiet, dark, and cool.

Create a routine: One of the best ways to train your body to sleep well is to go to bed and get up at around the same time every day, even on weekends and on days off.

Get up and try again: If you haven't been able to get to sleep after about 20 minutes, get up and do something calming or non-stimulating for about 20 minutes.

Reduce your stress levels by practicing relaxation exercises such as *mindful breathing*, especially at bedtime.

Before bedtime: Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol 4-6 hours before bedtime. Exercise 3-6 hours before bedtime. Take a hot bath or shower 1-2 hours before bedtime.

Be mindful of and control your exposure to bright lights depending on when you want to relax/sleep (lower exposure) or be stimulated/get up (increase exposure).

Try an app that helps promote good sleep: *Insomnia Coach app* and *CBT-i Coach app* are excellent resources to learn more about improving your sleep.

Remember that it is very common to not sleep well during periods of stress but you can significantly improve your patterns by practicing these tips.

If you are experiencing symptoms of distress related to your emotional well-being, please reach out for help. Should you require immediate medical attention, please call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room. You may also contact Mount Sinai's Emergency Department at 212-241-6500 or 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255). If you reside in NYC, you may also contact NYC Well at 1-888-NYC-WELL (1-888-692-9355).

The World Trade Center Health Program also provides mental health services for 9/11-related conditions. If you are interested in seeking assistance or learning more, please contact us directly at 212-241-8462 or 212-241-3250.