

INSOMNIA MANAGEMENT - 5

Bedtime Restriction

A pattern of sleeplessness (being unable to sleep) can develop due to a stressful or disturbing life event or simply because of poor sleep habits.

This can lead to feeling tired during the day, resulting in the belief that more time needs to be spent in bed to try to catch up on lost sleep.

People who experience sleeplessness during the night often extend their overall time in bed to try to catch up on lost sleep. This makes the problem worse, as more time is spent awake in bed, worried or frustrated at being unable to sleep.

These negative feelings can become associated with being in bed. They can increase alertness, make it more difficult to fall back to sleep and lead to feelings of exhaustion during the day. *This exhaustion is possibly a result of body tension brought on by anxiety.*

This cycle of sleeplessness continues and strengthens with time.

Spreading a night's sleep over too long a period of time will lead to sleep that is shallow and fragmented, resulting in negative feelings at night and fatigue during the day.

If you completed the Sleep Diary, it has probably highlighted that you are spending too much time in bed.

Can the cycle be changed?

YES!

- If you spend less time in bed, your sleep will improve and the amount of deep sleep will actually increase. What decreases is the shallower and less restorative, light stage of sleep.
- You will also fall asleep more quickly, have fewer and shorter night time awakenings and maintain sleep until it is time to wake up. Therefore, you will spend less time worrying about sleep so you will have more energy during the day.

By using Bedtime Restriction Therapy, the amount of time spent in bed will reduce. This will ensure that sleep only occurs between the set bedtime and wakeup time. Your sleep will then be of higher quality over a shorter period.

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Bedtime Restriction Procedure

A good starting point is the total sleep time recorded on your sleep diary.

This is what you do...

Step 1

Work out your average amount of sleep per night (from the sleep diary if completed).

- Be sure not to include the hours you spent lying in bed awake.
- Plan to stay in bed for only the length of your worked out average sleep time.

Step 2

Choose a regular wake-up time (to suit your own personal circumstances), and stick to it seven days a week.

Step 3

- Set a regular bedtime. To do this, start from your wake-up time and subtract the number of sleep hours you calculated in Step 1.

(For example, if you are to have five hours of bedtime and selected a wake up time of 6am then your regular bedtime needs to be 1am)

Step 4

After a few nights assess how well you are sleeping.

- If you have fallen asleep sooner and slept more soundly through the night than before, increase your allocated bedtime by 30 minutes.

As a guide, if you are now awake in bed for less than *40 minutes then you can extend your total time in bed. However, if you are awake for more than *40 minutes do not extend your time in bed.

*(*This includes both the time taken to fall asleep and time spent awake during the night.)*

Step 5

After a few more nights, if you are still falling asleep easily and staying asleep, increase your bedtime by another 30 minutes.

Step 6

Keep repeating Step 5 until you reach a point where you **no longer** fall sleep quickly and sleep well through the night, (i.e. your total wake time becomes more than 40 minutes).

- At this point, you are staying in bed too long so reduce it by 30 minutes to the previous bedtime.

Once you find your ideal bedtime and sleep schedule, stay with it.

- Use the extra time gained from reducing your total time in bed, as newfound time that was not available to you before.
- Use the extra time to catch up on chores or to spend time on a hobby.

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Bedtime Restriction Schedule

You may find it helpful to document your planned bedtime restriction schedule.

My average total sleep per night is _____ hours.

My wake-up time will be _____.

My bedtime will be _____.

What will happen?

In the beginning, this management technique is not easy to follow.

At first, you may feel a little tired and irritable as your body adapts to the shorter time spent in bed. You will probably feel sleepier than usual when you wake-up in the morning and during the day. It is important to stick to the new schedule and do not nap during the day. Maintaining some 'sleep pressure' from insufficient sleep in the early days of this technique will help your improvement.

If you follow the bedtime restriction routine it will work and the effects are long term.