



Accurate Clinic

2401 Veterans Memorial Blvd. Suite 16
Kenner, LA 70062 - 4799
Phone: 504.472.6130 Fax: 504.472.6128

www.AccurateClinic.com

The Obvious

Avoid stimulants. Caffeine is commonly found not just in coffee and tea but soft drinks, energy drinks and a variety of over the counter medications including pain medications and appetite suppressants. Alcohol can also interfere with sleep. Other less common stimulants such as guarana are found in health drinks and energy drinks. Foods high in sugar should be avoided near bedtime. Keep your intake of these substances to a minimum, especially late in the day.

The Mechanics of Sleep

Assess your mattress and pillows – if your bed is contributing to the problem, get a new one. When you meet with the physical therapist for your assessment, address any sleep concerns you have with physical therapist. The physical therapist has expertise in sleep positions, pillow placement and other physical aides for sleep.

Behavioral Methods

Avoid activities in bed not related to sleep or sex this includes reading and watching TV. You need to "train yourself" to relate to being in bed as equating to sleep and no other activity. The simple and obvious methods to facilitate sleep should not be forgotten: a period of down time for relaxation before attempting sleep, a warm bath, and/or a gentle massage. Studies have shown that the practice of Tai Chi and Yoga also improve sleep. Massage improves sleep as well.

1. Ritualize the Rhythms of Activity and Rest
 - Create an energizing ritual with morning light exposure and exercise.
 - Learn to rest during the day with meditation and breathing practices but avoid naps.
 - Maintain a regular sleep-wake schedule, even on weekends.
 - Develop a soothing evening ritual as a bridge to sleep.
2. Use Dusk and Darkness as Sleep Medicine
 - Simulate dusk: dim your lights for a couple of hours before bed.
 - Always use blue light reduction technology to watch TV or use computers.
3. Quiet Your Body Noise
 - Carefully check for possible sleep side effects of all medications used.
 - A bedtime snack of complex carbohydrates may be helpful.
4. Create a Sleep Sanctuary
 - Keep your bedroom cool (68 degrees or less), dark and quiet during sleep.
 - Gradually move toward a more "green"—organic and natural—bedroom.
 - Get electric clocks and other such devices away from your head and bed.
 - Do all you can to feel psychologically safe in your bedroom.
5. Learn to Surrender to Sleep
 - You cannot literally "go to sleep"—practice "letting go of waking."
 - Approach getting to sleep as a personal spiritual practice—an act of faith.
6. Don't Battle Nighttime Wakefulness
 - Go to bed only when you feel sleepy.
 - Never watch the clock from bed—it pulls us back into the waking world.
 - If you can't sleep, get up, sit in a comfortable spot until you're sleepy again.
 - Use nighttime wakefulness as an opportunity to meditate or pray.
7. Arise Mindfully with Intention in the Morning
 - Obtain at least 20 minutes of daily exposure to morning light shortly after arising.
 - Awaken slowly and explore your grogginess in the morning.
 - Let the memories of your dreams come and note them.
 - Set conscious intentions to guide your waking day.



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Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Training in CBT is considered the first step towards overcoming insomnia. CBT offers a variety of techniques including deep relaxation, meditation and other methods to promote sleep. Our psychotherapist is trained in teaching CBT as well as providing anxiety and stress management. With a little time and practice, these easily learned techniques allow for significantly improved sleep without the need to turn to medications. Individual and group CBT sessions are available and encouraged: please schedule an appointment at your convenience.

Online **free** self-help CBT and sleep aid courses:

Guided Relaxation, Meditation **free** downloads: <http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/gallery1.htm>

Sleep Medications (Hypnotics)

Here it gets complicated because many factors come into play when considering chemical based sleep aides. There are no perfect sleep medications. Importantly, it isn't just the simple act of providing sedation that makes a sleeping medication effective. The quality of sleep, not just quantity, is an important factor in how restful sleep is perceived and how well one can function the next day. Throughout the night people cycle in and out of 5 stages of sleep, including the REM and deep stages, 3 and 4. The quality and amount of time spent in each stage can have a great impact on the effectiveness of sleep. Different medications impact differently on sleep stages and therefore can greatly affect the quality of sleep for example by suppressing REM sleep. Suppressing REM sleep can interfere with one's memory processing.

Tolerance is another factor that is as important with sleep medications as with pain medications. The continued use of a sleep medication or supplement often creates tolerance which over time can greatly reduce its effectiveness. For this reason, it is often best to limit the use of sleeping medications to every other night or two nights out of three rather than using a sleep medication every night. Sleeping medications should also be rotated from time to time to break the pattern of tolerance.

Natural and Herbal Sleep Aids

The following are natural substances that are believed to be safe and effective for sleep:

Magnesium - Available as tablets (400-700mg/day) or as Epsom Salts for use in bathing (the Mg is absorbed through the skin).

Kava kava - Current research suggest Kava may be severely toxic to the liver in rare cases and is not advised.

Valerian Root - An aromatic, herbal tea available at health food stores and some pharmacies. No significant drug interactions. It may have a slow onset of effect (2-3 weeks) but it does have profound beneficial effects on sleep architecture (improves deep sleep) that may make it particularly suitable for long-term use and for the elderly.

Dose: 400-900mg

Lavender - Either used as a massage oil or flowers/spray to scent your sleep environment, lavender improves sleep

Melatonin - Recommend doses vary from 1-5mg and sometimes higher.

Gotu Kola (1gm 2-3 times/day) is believed helpful for anxiety and insomnia. Gotu kola (*Centella asiatica*) has been used to treat many conditions for thousands of years in India, China, and Indonesia. It is available in teas and as dried herbs, tinctures, capsules, tablets, and ointments.

Passion Flower (500-2000mg/day) The tea is safe and effective.



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Lemon Balm

Capsules: Take 300 - 500 mg dried lemon balm, 3 times daily or as needed.

Tea: 1.5 - 4.5 grams (1/4 - 1 teaspoonful) of dried lemon balm herb in hot water.

Steep and drink up to 4 times daily.

Lemon balm may potentially interact with the following medications:

Sedatives, thyroid medications -- Lemon balm may interact with sedatives and thyroid medications. If you are taking sedatives (for insomnia or anxiety) or medications to regulate your thyroid, ask your doctor before taking lemon balm.

HIV medications -- avoid use of lemon balm if you're taking medication for HIV.

5-Hydroxytryptophan (5-HTP)

5-HTP dietary supplements help raise serotonin levels in the brain. Since serotonin helps regulate mood and behavior, 5-HTP may have a positive effect on sleep, mood, anxiety, appetite, and pain sensation. In one study, people who took 5-HTP went to sleep quicker and slept more deeply than those who took placebo. These researchers recommend 200 - 400 mg at night to stimulate serotonin, but it may take 6 - 12 weeks to be fully effective. Side effects of 5-HTP are generally mild and may include nausea, heartburn, gas, feelings of fullness, and rumbling sensations in some people. At high doses, it is possible to trigger a serotonin syndrome so use with caution with antidepressants, dextromethorphan, triptans like Imitrex, Ultram and Nucynta.

Chamomile

Tea: Pour 1 cup of boiling water over 2-3 Tbs. of dried herb, steep 10-15 minutes. Drink 3-4 x/day between meals.

Possible Interactions:

Sedatives -- Chamomile can make these drugs stronger

Blood-thinning meds (anticoagulants and antiplatelets)

Chamomile may increase the risk of bleeding when taken with warfarin (Coumadin), clopidogrel (Plavix), and aspirin

Blood pressure medications -- Chamomile may lower blood pressure slightly

Diabetes medications -- Chamomile may lower blood sugar if taken with diabetes meds

American Skullcap (Not Chinese Skullcap) - It is important that American skullcap be obtained from a reliable source. High doses of the tincture may cause giddiness, stupor, mental confusion, twitching, irregular heartbeat, and seizures. American skullcap should not be used during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Hops (*Humulus lupulus*) The use of hops for insomnia as an infusion in tea was reported to have a calming effect within 20-40 minutes of ingestion.⁵⁷ A recommended dose is 0.5 g of the dried herb, or its equivalent in extract-based products, taken one to several times daily.⁵¹ Side-effects are uncommon, and large doses have been ingested safely.