

SLEEP PROBLEMS

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

Sleep is critical to health and healing. Everyone is different in the amount of sleep they need. As we age, we need less sleep but generally most adults sleep between 7 and 8 hours a night. The important thing is that you feel refreshed and well when you wake up.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF POOR SLEEP?

- Tiredness during the day
- Poor concentration and memory
- Irritability and frustration
- Feeling more stressed, less able to cope
- Increased risk of accident and injuries

WHAT CAUSES SLEEP PROBLEMS?

- Some sleeping problems are caused by sleep disorders which require medical treatment
- Physical conditions (headache, backache, arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, asthma, etc.)
- Some medications
- Emotional problems (stress, anxiety, depression)
- Lifestyle (caffeine, cigarettes, activity)
- Sleeping environment (noise, light)

WHAT CAN I DO?

- **Take a look at your lifestyle.**

Caffeine: Cut down total daily amount of tea, coffee, cola and chocolate and limit evening amounts.

Food: Don't go to bed on a full stomach. Rich and spicy foods can interfere with sleep.

Alcohol and other fluids, cigarettes: Limit intake before bedtime.

Activity: Regular exercise will improve sleep; however do not exercise in the late evening.

- **Check the bedroom:** Perhaps it is time to invest in a new mattress. Make sure that this room is quiet and peaceful.
- **Learn some relaxation techniques:** Breathe slowly, use muscle relaxation techniques, acupuncture or meditation.

- **Routine:** Establish a regular time to go to bed and get up in the morning.
- **Prepare for sleep:** Help your body and mind to relax by taking a warm bath, doing some relaxation exercises, reading a book, listening to soothing music. Avoid anything that will activate your thinking or jazz you up prior to bed such as distressing conversations, movies, books or TV programs.
- **See your Doctor** to rule out sleep disorder or other physical or medication problems. If your sleeping problem is caused by emotions, your doctor may refer you to a mental health professional for further treatment.
- **Be careful of sleeping pills.** This is not a long term solution; pills can be addictive and can cause further problems, especially if combined with alcohol or other drugs.

WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

Your family doctor or mental health professional can help you learn techniques to keep you healthy. A professional can see you individually or you could join a group educational session.

Call the Mental Health Program, South Shore Health for an appointment or information on free acupuncture or group programs.

**Mental Health Program, South Shore Health
Dawson Centre, Level 2
197 Dufferin Street
Bridgewater, Nova Scotia
B4V 2G9**

Call 527-5228 Monday to Friday (except holidays) 8:30-4:30

www.mentalhealthsouthshore.ca

