



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
HEART INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT DE CARDIOLOGIE  
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# **CARDIAC REHABILITATION**

## SLEEP MODULE

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## 1. WHAT DOES NORMAL SLEEP LOOK LIKE?

Adults usually sleep between 6 and 9 hours per night. It is a myth that everyone needs 8 hours of sleep each night. How much sleep you need to feel rested each day can vary from person to person. Generally, it is thought that people wake up 1 or 2 times each night. (e.g. getting up to use the washroom and waking up and moving around). Normally, you should not be awake longer than 30 minutes at a time. Having difficulty falling back asleep may be a sign that your sleep pattern has been disturbed.

### What does poor sleep look like?

Poor sleep can be characterized in many ways, but typically involves one or more of the following:

- Several awakenings throughout the night
- Racing thoughts in bed that make it difficult to fall asleep
- Daytime fatigue due to a restless or non-refreshing sleep
- Restlessness in bed, including restless legs
- Snoring (e.g. sleep apnea)

## 2. WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF POOR SLEEP?

Poor sleep can have many effects on our bodies. We typically experience diminished cognitive ability after a poor night's sleep (e.g. poorer memory, ability to learn new things, and judgment). We can also experience decreased energy, increased fatigue, less interest in sex, and physiological effects (e.g. higher blood pressure and/or weight gain).

## 3. WHAT IS INSOMNIA?

Insomnia is diagnosed when a person develops a chronic inability to fall asleep, stay asleep, or both. Insomnia, when it becomes chronic, is a debilitating disorder that typically only improves with adequate treatment. It can be treated medically (i.e. medication to help you sleep) and/or psychological treatment (i.e. therapy and behavioral strategies to help you sleep). Therapy is recommended for long-term change, as chronic insomnia typically returns once a person stops taking sleep medication.



#### 4. WHAT ARE THE BASICS OF SLEEP HYGIENE?

There are a few rules about sleep that are useful to follow. These rules are often called basic sleep hygiene, and they include:



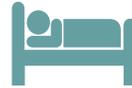
##### Limit alcohol

before bed in order to reduce the need to get up and use the washroom and also to get a more refreshing sleep



##### Limit stimulants

(e.g. caffeine, nicotine) a couple of hours before going to sleep, as these can make it harder to fall asleep



##### Control your environment

– make sure your bedroom is quiet and dark, and find a mattress that you are comfortable on



##### Does your bed partner snore?

Do they have a different sleep/wake schedule? These things will affect how you are able to sleep

#### 5. WHAT IS RECOMMENDED TO TREAT POOR SLEEP?

- Get up at the same (early) time each day, even on the weekends
- Avoid napping, especially in the afternoon and evening
- Exercise helps, but not in the evening
- Be careful with alcohol
- Be careful with stimulants (caffeine & nicotine)
- Create habitual bedtime routines
- Relaxation and meditation helps
- No heavy meals before bedtime
- Go to bed only when sleepy
- Use the bedroom only for sleeping and sex
- Get out of bed if not sleeping for 20 minutes or so
  - Take racing thoughts to another room
  - Clear your head time
  - Don't problem solve in bed
  - Engage in non-stimulating activity

#### SET UP THE BEDROOM



No bright lights



No TV



No clock to watch



Comfortable bed



Bed partner issues resolved

#### Resources

Davidson, J.R. (2012). *Sink Into Sleep: A Step-by-Step Workbook for Insomnia*. Demos Medical Publishing