

- reduce caffeine
- limit alcohol
- stop smoking

Three things every insomniac should do. *"No More Sleepless Nights"*, Hauri and Linde

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Peter Hauri, Director of the Mayo Clinic Insomnia Program, recommends the following strategies in his book:

Rule 1

Cut down sleep time: some people tend to stay in bed too long on the assumption that it will lead to more sleep. If you need 7 hours, but stay in bed for 9, contrary to expectation, you won't necessarily have 2 hours of insomnia at the end of the night; instead you are likely to have 7 hours' worth of sleep spread out thinly over the 9 hours.

This would mean trouble falling asleep, frequent waking and shallow sleep. Because you then get up feeling unrested, you are likely to think you need longer in bed and thus compound the problem.

What you need to do is go back to the number of hours you used to sleep on average before insomnia set in. This is going to be difficult and your body will tell you it isn't at all happy with

this, and you may feel rough for a few weeks, but it will restore your sleep pattern.

Some sleep doctors even recommend only staying in bed for the number of hours you are actually sleeping, but this can be overly drastic in people who are unwell generally.

The important thing is to improve your sleep efficiency; if you stay in bed for 6 hours but only sleep for 4 then you have 75% efficiency. By creating a state of very mild sleep deprivation, this **sleep restriction therapy** promotes more rapid sleep onset and more efficient sleep.

Rule 2

Never try to sleep: if you tend to fall asleep watching TV but then come wide awake as soon as you go to bed, then this suggests you might be trying too hard to sleep.

Using distractions like listening to music, reading a book or watching TV can be helpful: don't think of this as lost sleep time, but as bonus waking time. There is an added bonus that these activities may help distract from pain.

Rule 3

Don't be afraid of insomnia: some people become very focused on being unable to sleep and may even develop a real fear of their sleep loss (psychologists give this the grand label of agrypniaphobia).

Lack of sleep doesn't mean you won't be able to function the next day. A lot of famous personalities have suffered from insomnia and still managed to cope: Lewis Carroll, Rudyard Kipling, Winston Churchill to name but a few.

Rule 4

Use rituals: watch the news, have a bath, change into pyjamas, let the cat out, etc. : if you find that your bedtime rituals help to relax you, then keep them going; sometimes people find they associate these rituals with becoming more and more tense at the prospect of another poor night's sleep. If so, it may help to change them somewhat and try something new.

Rule 5

Give yourself time to wind down: the brain doesn't have an on/off switch, or even a standby button like the TV; we may wish we had snooze function like our alarm clock, but we don't.

One of the best ways is to take a hot bath. Spending 20-30 minutes in water just over 100 degrees Fahrenheit is best, but some people get dizzy at this temperature and some arachniacs cannot stand the heat.

In fact, like MS, arachnoiditis seems to cause heat intolerance and heat may bring on worsening symptoms in some people: in others the heat soothes pain and muscle tension.

A massage is another helpful way to wind down. Using aromatherapy oils such as lavender can add to the benefit. Sex can be a good way of relaxing, provided of course that it doesn't cause either physical or psychological discomfort.

Rule 6

Keep a regular schedule: we are creatures of habit and if we mess about with our body clock, it is bound to have an ill effect. It is therefore helpful to establish a routine for bedtime and when to get up.

That can be tricky to fit in with illness because some days it is much harder either to get to sleep or indeed to get up. It is also important to establish a sensible routine with medication.

Rule 7

Try a short nap: most sources say that a day-time nap is a real no-no, but Hauri recommends trying it; it works for some and not for others, but he makes a valid point when he says that if we have had a nap, then the pressure is off a bit when we go to bed, we are that bit less desperate for sleep.

Add to that the rule of not clock-watching: seeing the minutes tick by only makes things worse. Turn the clock so that you can't see it.