

Sleep and Adult ADHD

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Everyone wants to get a good night's sleep. But when you have ADHD, it can be even more challenging.

Sleep problems often go hand in hand with ADHD. And when you don't sleep well, you can have more trouble focusing.

What Your Doctor Checks First

Finding and treating any sleep problems outside of your ADHD is the first step to sleeping well. Your doctor will first want to rule out conditions like sleep apnea, insomnia, or snoring.

Sometimes, sleep problems can be due to your ADHD symptoms. People with ADHD often complain that their minds are overactive and keep churning when they go to sleep, "They have difficulty turning off and going to bed," says Lenard Adler, MD, professor of psychiatry at NYU Langone Medical Center.

You may know that you should go to sleep, but you want to read one more chapter in your book, or watch one more TV show. Before you know it, you're up hours past your bedtime.

"These are symptoms of self-management and self-control," says J. Russell Ramsay, PhD, co-director of the University of Pennsylvania Adult ADHD Treatment & Research Program. "They think, 'I know exactly what I need to do, but I have a hard time doing it.'"

Sleep Better

To help you sleep better, practice these good sleep habits:

- Don't have caffeine after lunch.
- Turn off all bright screens (computer, TV, tablets, phones) an hour before bed. Bright screens trick your eyes into thinking it's daytime.
- Exercise regularly.
- Set a calming bedtime routine, such as reading, taking a bath, or stretching.
- Try meditation, yoga, deep breathing, or listening to music to help you relax.

Does Your Medication Play a Role?

If you still can't shut off your mind at night, consider adjusting your ADHD medication. The medication can interfere with sleep, and it may help to take your medication earlier or later in the day.

"Your doctor can change the timing of dose or give you a nonstimulant option or longer-acting medications that if taken early enough in the day, they'll wear off," Ramsay says.

Talk with your doctor to decide what may be best for you.

SOURCES:

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