

## Factsheet

# THE 5 GOLDEN RULES OF SLEEP



## 5 rules to help you sleep better

1

### Get up (overall) at the same time every day

To stick to a more or less identical bedtime from one evening to the next, it's important to get up at around the same time +/- 1 hour, including at weekends and during holidays. It's not easy to do this all the time, and we've all had an all-nighter for professional or leisure reasons. But it's no big deal as long as it's exceptional. It's more of a problem when you have alternating wake-up times (for example, 7am on weekdays and 12pm at weekends).

2

### Go to bed when you feel sleepy

Why? It seems obvious, but in reality we often do the opposite, because that's what we've been taught since childhood: we go to sleep at a given time in order to get our sleep count, and we think that « because it's that time », « because it's late », « because tomorrow I have a big day », we'll automatically fall asleep quickly... Staying in bed when you're not sleepy is not serious if it happens occasionally. However, if you find yourself in this situation a lot, it's possible that your brain unconsciously associates the thoughts « I'm going to bed » and « I'm not going to sleep », so that you gradually become anxious about going to sleep... and because of your anxiety you don't sleep well. It's a vicious circle.

What can you do about it? The rule is to go to sleep when you feel sleepy. This can be expressed in different ways: yawning, progressive numbness of the limbs, myoclonus (sudden contractions and relaxations of parts of the body or muscles), difficulty concentrating, shivering or a feeling of freshness.

If after 20 minutes you're still tossing and turning in bed and can't feel the signs of falling asleep, apply the same rule: get out of bed and do some gentle activities (reading, tidying up, paperwork, sewing, etc.) while you wait for sleep to come.

3

#### Hide the time

When we have sleep problems, we tend to fixate on the time: this focus on the time is counter-productive because it increases the feeling of anxiety and negative thoughts: « I'm going to be exhausted tomorrow! Why is this happening to me again? What's wrong with me? » ; « I've got to force myself to sleep ». When you wake up at night, it's best not to look at your alarm clock or your phone. If you need to, you can get up, have a glass of water and then go back to sleep, focusing on pleasant images and relaxing your muscles. Don't necessarily try to sleep, but rather to relax.

4

#### Get enough light

We can't say it often enough: we are creatures of habit. The brain regulates our sleep/wake cycle. In order for the brain to be able to secrete sleep hormones, or conversely to stop producing them, it's essential to be exposed to sufficient light that can be perceived by the retina of the eye. Getting up at a fixed time in the morning and exposing yourself to bright light (in winter) or natural light (in spring and summer) can help you to maintain a regular sleep pattern.

5

#### Ritualize bedtime

Why? Keeping a regular sleep pattern isn't easy. It's tempting to sleep whenever and however you want. While this type of behaviour isn't very serious when it's occasional, it can become much more problematic over time: our body needs regular time patterns and a minimum of routine. If you're the kind of person who puts off going to bed, it can be useful to establish a bedtime ritual that allows you to prepare yourself mentally to go to sleep.

For example :

- Take a quick shower to relax your muscles
- Put on a light and comfortable outfit or a bathrobe
- Turn off electric lights
- Light a few candles and/ or a little incense
- Put background music
- Read a chapter of novel / Make crosswords or matters / Make an artistic task (draw, write, paint...).

Just before going to bed, perfume your pillows with a scented textile mist to maintain the state of relaxation when you go to bed.

Ideally, repeat this little ritual every night, or at least several times a week, so you establish a routine. The aim is to relax and enjoy yourself. What about you? What routine could you introduce?