



## **SLEEP AND MENTAL ILLNESS**

Information for Patients and Families

Covenant Health

Mental Health Program

Grey Nuns Community Hospital & Misericordia Community Hospital

### **Why do we need sleep?**

Sleep nourishes our mind just like food and water. Without it, our brain does not work as well as it can.

- Without sleep, we have difficulty with memory, doing simple tasks (writing), mood control, concentration and making good decisions. Without sleep we have difficulty recovering from an illness.
- Many people have problems getting a good nights sleep.
- Mental illness can affect our sleep (you could sleep too much or too little).
- Getting too much sleep or not getting enough sleep makes it hard to get better.
- Not sleeping well can become a problem in many ways and lead to :
  - insomnia (inability to sleep)
  - sleeping too much during the day and not able to sleep at night
  - strange night time events such as sleep walking, night terrors, and bad dreams

### **How much sleep is enough?**

- On average adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night.
- You may need to take sleep medication for a while so that you can get sleep while you are recovering from a mental illness.

### **What are the biggest “sleep stealers”?**

- Mental illness e.g. depression or anxiety.
- Stress from school, job, illness, etc.
- Alcohol & caffeine
- Smoking cigarettes
- Surroundings - noisy, too hot, too cold, light.
- When we expect to have problems falling asleep and worry about it.
- Discomfort - pain, headache

### **How can I get a good sleep?**

- Try to go to bed only when you are sleepy.
- Make sleep a priority.
- Establish a regular wake time schedule.

- For 6 hr. before bedtime, avoid coffee, chocolate, non-herbal teas and sodas as they contain caffeine.
- Exercise in the morning instead of right before bedtime.
- Use your bed only for sleeping or sex. Avoid using the bed for watching TV.
- Do not worry about not getting enough sleep.
- If you cannot sleep after 30 min. get out of bed and do something else, for example, read.
- Have a bedtime routine (e.g. wash your face, brush your teeth, put on pajamas, go to bed)
- Relax before bed (e.g. take a bath).
- See your doctor if sleeping problems continue.
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## **Where can you get more information?**

- ask your doctor or nurse or health care professional
- call Health Link - 780-408-5465
- Visit The Canadian Sleep Society website for more information about specific sleep problems

<http://www.css.to/brochures.html>

Notes

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