WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I CAN’T SLEEP?

HOW’S YOUR SLEEP?
College students are at risk for not getting enough sleep. With demanding work and class schedules and busy social lives, students often give sleep a low priority. Sleep deprivation and insomnia can have negative effects, such as contributing to memory problems or difficulty in logical reasoning. They can contribute to hormone function and blood pressure problems, as well as decreases in both efficiency and ability to concentrate.

HEALTHY SLEEP TIPS
Healthy sleep habits can make a big difference. Eight hours of sleep is the general guideline, but individual needs can vary from as little as five to as many as 10 hours to feel rested and refreshed.

KEEP THESE SLEEP PRACTICES ON A CONSISTENT BASIS:
Stick to the same bedtime and wake-up time, even on the weekends. A regular sleep schedule helps regulate your body clock and could help you fall and stay asleep for the night.

- Establish a soothing bedtime routine. Transition from your active day by relaxing for 30-60 minutes. Take a warm bath or shower, read a book, prepare your lunch/backpack for the next day or journal — especially if you lie in bed worrying.
- Modify alcohol intake. Although alcohol can help you to fall asleep, it disrupts the sleep cycle and will leave you feeling less rested. For more assistance in this area, visit Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention Programs on NDSU’s website.
- Exercise daily. Vigorous exercise produces a higher percentage of deep sleep and fewer awakenings during the night. But, don’t exercise just before bedtime.
- Evaluate your room. Your bedroom should be cool – between 60 and 67 degrees. It should be dark and free from noise that can disturb your sleep. This includes a bed partner’s sleep disruptions like snoring. Consider using blackout curtains, eyeshades, earplugs, “white noise” machines, humidifiers or fans.
- Reduce caffeine intake. For most people, caffeine contributes to insomnia and disrupts sleep. Don’t consume caffeine four to six hours before bedtime. Coffee, tea, soft drinks, chocolate and some pain medications include caffeine.
- Decrease smoking. Large amounts of nicotine in the blood result in agitation and decreased restful sleep. If you need help, see the ND Quits website at www.ndquits.gov.
- If you can’t sleep, go into another room and do something relaxing until you feel tired. For some people, using an electronic device such as a computer, smartphone or tablet can make it hard to fall asleep, because the “blue light” from the screen is activating the brain. Avoid these distractions 60 minutes before sleep.
- If you’re still having trouble sleeping, speak with your health care provider. You also may benefit from a sleep diary to help evaluate patterns or issues with your sleep.

SOURCES:
Center for Disease Control and Prevention - Sleep
National Sleep Foundation—Hot topics: College students and sleep