

Still Counting Sheep?

Better sleep doesn't have to come in a pill.

For people with chronic insomnia, studies show that simple behavioral and psychological treatments work just as well, and sometimes better, than popular medications, according to a report in *The Journal of Family Practice*.

5 The **behavioral strategies** for better sleep are **deceptively** simple, and that's one reason why many people don't believe they can make a difference. One of the most effective methods is **stimulus** control. This means not watching television, eating or reading in bed. Don't go to bed until you are sleepy. Get up at the same time every day, and don't nap during the day. If you are unable to sleep, get out of bed after 15 minutes and do something relaxing, but avoid **stimulating activity** and thoughts.

10 So-called sleep **hygiene** is also part of sleep therapy. This includes regular exercise, adding light-proof blinds to your bedroom to keep it dark and making sure the bed and room temperatures are comfortable. Eat regular meals, don't go to bed hungry and limit beverages, particularly alcohol and caffeinated drinks, around bedtime.

15 Finally, don't try too hard to fall asleep, and turn the clock around so you can't see it. Watching time pass is one of the worst things to do when you're trying to fall asleep. It may be hard to believe, but studies show these simple steps really do make a meaningful difference for people with sleep problems. These interventions are based on the notion that thoughts and behaviors can "hyper-arouse" the central nervous system and deregulate sleep cycles, resulting in chronic insomnia, reports *Family Practice*.

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Discussion Questions:

1. What was the report in The Journal of Family Practice about?
2. What is chronic insomnia?
3. So what are the 3 solutions to curing chronic insomnia?
4. What are some examples of stimulating activity and thoughts? (from line 10)
5. What time do you sleep?
6. What do you do before you go to sleep?
7. What are some examples of 'sleep hygiene?' (from line 11)
8. Do you drink a lot of caffeine drinks or alcohol late at night? Do you think that affects your sleep?
9. What does the article say our thoughts and behaviors do to our body when we try to sleep?
10. How do you feel when you wake up? Do you feel tired or recharged?
11. How many hours of sleep do you get?
12. Have you ever tried to fall asleep but the more you tried you couldn't?
13. Do you have any sleeping tips of your own?
14. Do you dream?
15. What kind of dream do you dream? Tell me about your most recent dream.