

# Family Chiropractic

*Courtesy of Harbourfront Family Chiropractic*

*by Dr. Warren Gage*



## Sleep better: eight simple steps

Ten to fifteen percent of North Americans suffer from chronic insomnia. Do you? Most of us experience an occasional sleepless night, but prolonged bouts of insomnia can lead to decreased mental function, frazzled nerves, and lowered immunity. The good news is that you don't have to pop a pill or count sheep: Just follow these simple, natural steps to get more Zs.

**Exercise regularly**, but don't exercise within six hours of your bedtime. Physical activity speeds up your heart rate and metabolism, making it difficult to wind down at night. Try to schedule your workouts in the morning, so you can benefit from that extra energy during the day.

**Avoid caffeine after noon.** Caffeine is a stimulant found in coffee, tea, cola, and chocolate. Some people clear caffeine from their bodies slowly (you know who you are). These people should avoid caffeine completely.

**Avoid alcohol.** Many people find that alcohol helps them relax at night. Although it may help induce sleep initially, alcohol disrupts your normal sleep patterns, leaving you tired and groggy in the morning.

**Keep regular sleeping hours.** Your body likes routine and will respond better to a consistent bedtime.

**Don't work on the computer or watch television** for at least one hour before going to bed. These activities stimulate your mind at a time when you should be preparing for rest.

**Avoid eating large, late evening meals.** Do eat a light snack a couple hours before retiring to avoid low blood sugar levels in the middle of the night, which can wake you up.

**Decrease light in your bedroom.** A dark environment is necessary for the production of melatonin, a hormone that encourages a healthy sleep cycle.

**Try yoga or meditation** to clear your mind and help prepare your body for sleep. Like regular sleeping hours, a steady practice will yield the greatest benefits.

In addition, if your insomnia is caused or made worse by aches and pains at night, it may be time for a new mattress and/or pillow -- and a visit to your doctor of chiropractic. Your sleeping surface should support the entire body -- including the spine, neck, head, and limbs-- evenly, with no gaps. For recommendations tailored to your specific needs, talk to your doctor of chiropractic. Chiropractic can also help promote better sleep by correcting imbalances and tension in the body, so that you can relax completely.