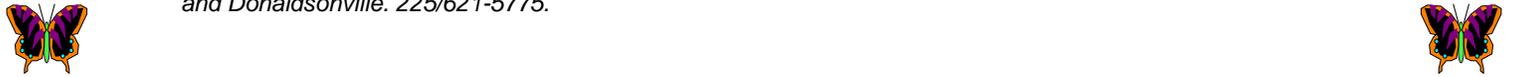
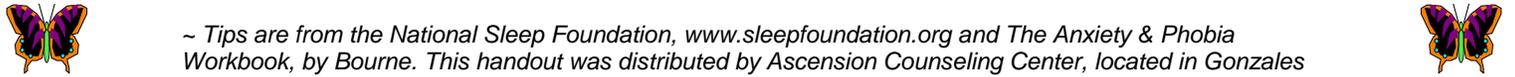
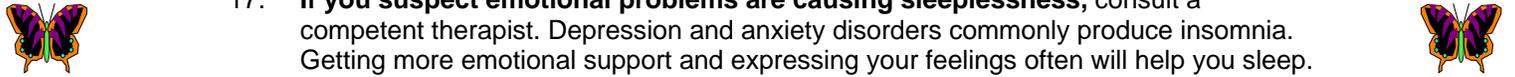
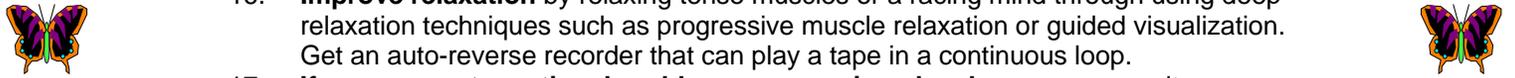
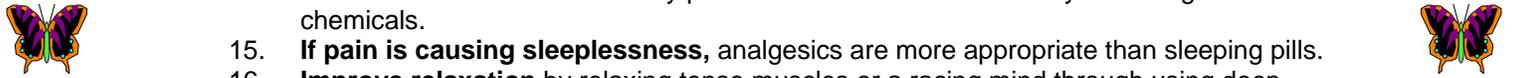
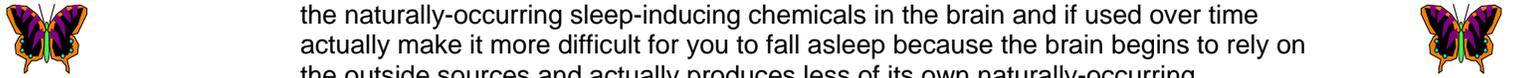
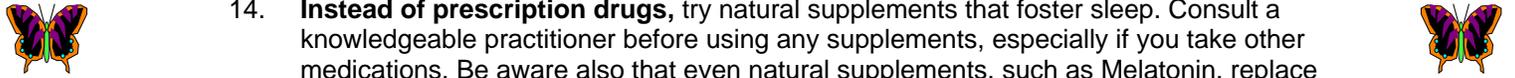
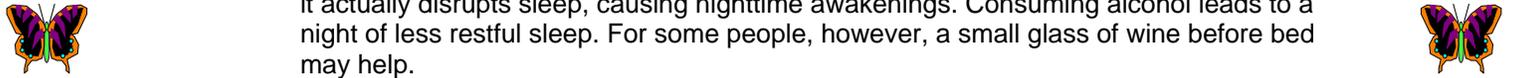
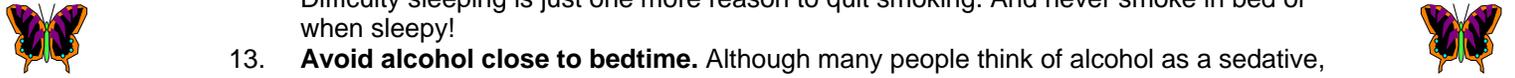
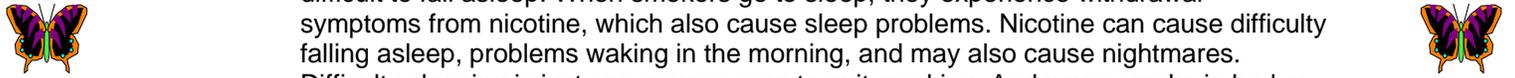
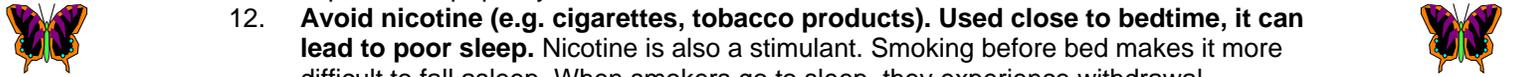
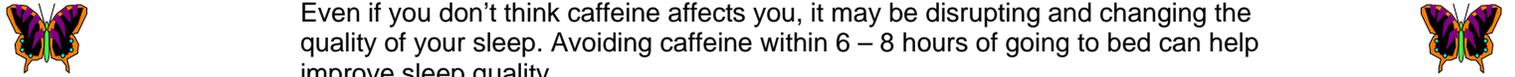
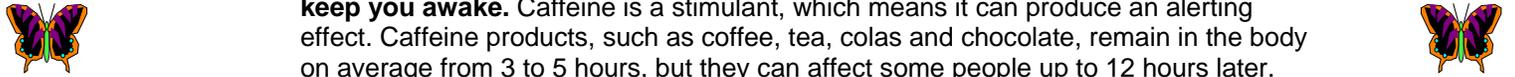
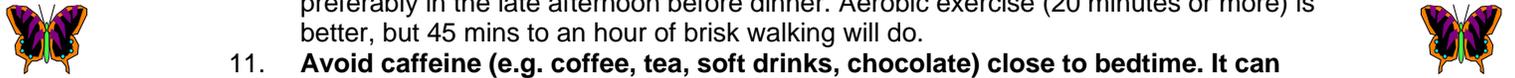
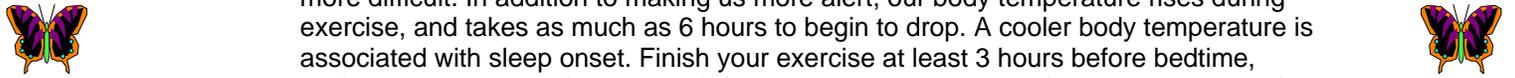
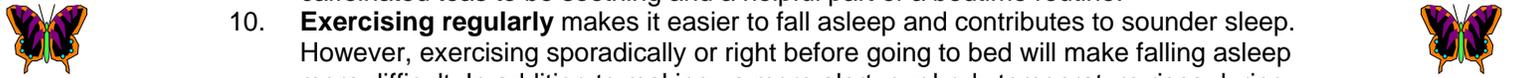
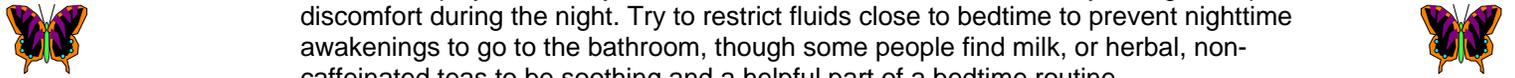
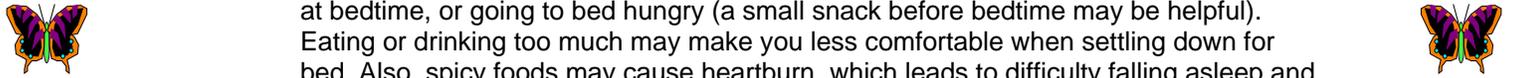
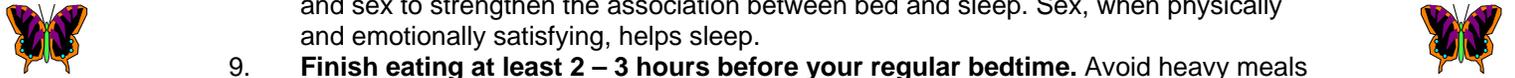
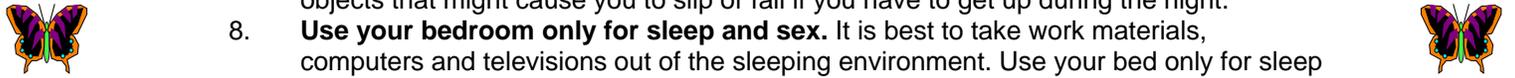
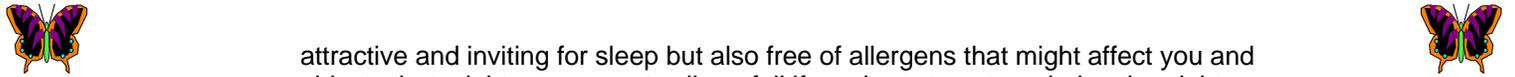




GUIDELINES FOR A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

1. **Go to bed and get up at regular times**, even if you're tired in the morning, including weekends. Don't vary your time of going to bed or getting up. Getting up a half hour earlier in the morning may help you get to sleep that night. And don't nap during the day or it will affect your ability to sleep at night. Our sleep-wake cycle is regulated by a "circadian clock" in our brain and the body's need to balance both sleep time and wake time. A regular waking time in the morning strengthens the circadian function and can help with sleep onset at night. That is also why it's important to keep a regular bedtime and wake-time, even on weekends when there is the temptation to sleep-in.
2. **Don't try to make yourself sleep.** If you're unable to fall asleep after 20 – 30 minutes in bed, leave your bed, engage in some relaxing activity (such as watching TV, sitting in a chair and listening to a relaxation tape, or having a cup of herb tea), and don't return to bed until you're sleepy.
3. **Don't let yourself be afraid of insomnia.** Work on accepting those nights when you don't sleep as well. You can still function the next day, even if you had only a couple of hours of sleep. The less you fight, resist, or fear sleeplessness, the more it will tend to go away.
4. **Turn yourself down** during the last hour or two of the day. Avoid vigorous physical or mental activity, emotional upsets, and so on. Avoid arousing activities before bedtime like working, paying bills, engaging in competitive games or family problem-solving. Finally, avoid exposure to bright light before bedtime because it signals the neurons that help control the sleep/wake cycle that it is time to awaken, not to sleep.
5. **Develop a sleep ritual before bedtime.** This is some activity that you do every night before you get into bed that helps you relax. Establish a regular, relaxing bedtime routine such as soaking in a hot bath or hot tub and then reading a book or listening to soothing music. A relaxing, routine activity right before bedtime conducted away from bright lights helps separate your sleep time from activities that can cause excitement, stress or anxiety which can make it more difficult to fall asleep, get sound and deep sleep or remain asleep. Some studies suggest that soaking in hot water (such as a hot tub or bath) before retiring to bed can ease the transition into deeper sleep, but is should be done early enough that you are no longer sweating or over-heated. If you are unable to avoid tension and stress, it may be helpful to learn relaxation therapy from a trained professional.
6. **Create a sleep-supportive room that is dark, quiet, comfortable and cool.** Design your sleep environment to establish the conditions you need for sleep – cool, dark, comfortable and free of interruptions. Also make your bedroom reflective of the value you place on sleep. Check your room for noise or other distractions, including a bed partner's sleep disruptions such as snoring, light, and a dry or hot environment. Consider using blackout curtains, eye shades, ear plugs, "white noise", humidifiers, fans and other devices. Keep your room temperature between 60 and 70 degrees. Too warm or cold a room tends to interfere with sleep. Use fans for a hot room if air conditioning is unavailable. If your partner snores, kicks, or tosses and turns, have separate beds at whatever distance is mutually acceptable. If you associate a particular activity or item with anxiety about sleeping, omit it from your bedtime routine. For example, if looking at a bedroom clock makes you anxious about how much time you have before you must get up; move the clock out of sight. Don't engage in activities that cause you anxiety and prevent you from sleeping.
7. **Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillows.** Make sure your mattress is comfortable and supportive. The one you've been using for years may have exceeded its life expectancy – about 9 or 10 years for most good quality mattresses. Try varying the firmness of your mattress by buying a new one or adding a board underneath, a featherbed, or an "egg-crate" foam pad. Have comfortable pillows and make the room



- attractive and inviting for sleep but also free of allergens that might affect you and objects that might cause you to slip or fall if you have to get up during the night.
8. **Use your bedroom only for sleep and sex.** It is best to take work materials, computers and televisions out of the sleeping environment. Use your bed only for sleep and sex to strengthen the association between bed and sleep. Sex, when physically and emotionally satisfying, helps sleep.
 9. **Finish eating at least 2 – 3 hours before your regular bedtime.** Avoid heavy meals at bedtime, or going to bed hungry (a small snack before bedtime may be helpful). Eating or drinking too much may make you less comfortable when settling down for bed. Also, spicy foods may cause heartburn, which leads to difficulty falling asleep and discomfort during the night. Try to restrict fluids close to bedtime to prevent nighttime awakenings to go to the bathroom, though some people find milk, or herbal, non-caffeinated teas to be soothing and a helpful part of a bedtime routine.
 10. **Exercising regularly** makes it easier to fall asleep and contributes to sounder sleep. However, exercising sporadically or right before going to bed will make falling asleep more difficult. In addition to making us more alert, our body temperature rises during exercise, and takes as much as 6 hours to begin to drop. A cooler body temperature is associated with sleep onset. Finish your exercise at least 3 hours before bedtime, preferably in the late afternoon before dinner. Aerobic exercise (20 minutes or more) is better, but 45 mins to an hour of brisk walking will do.
 11. **Avoid caffeine (e.g. coffee, tea, soft drinks, chocolate) close to bedtime. It can keep you awake.** Caffeine is a stimulant, which means it can produce an alerting effect. Caffeine products, such as coffee, tea, colas and chocolate, remain in the body on average from 3 to 5 hours, but they can affect some people up to 12 hours later. Even if you don't think caffeine affects you, it may be disrupting and changing the quality of your sleep. Avoiding caffeine within 6 – 8 hours of going to bed can help improve sleep quality.
 12. **Avoid nicotine (e.g. cigarettes, tobacco products). Used close to bedtime, it can lead to poor sleep.** Nicotine is also a stimulant. Smoking before bed makes it more difficult to fall asleep. When smokers go to sleep, they experience withdrawal symptoms from nicotine, which also cause sleep problems. Nicotine can cause difficulty falling asleep, problems waking in the morning, and may also cause nightmares. Difficulty sleeping is just one more reason to quit smoking. And never smoke in bed or when sleepy!
 13. **Avoid alcohol close to bedtime.** Although many people think of alcohol as a sedative, it actually disrupts sleep, causing nighttime awakenings. Consuming alcohol leads to a night of less restful sleep. For some people, however, a small glass of wine before bed may help.
 14. **Instead of prescription drugs,** try natural supplements that foster sleep. Consult a knowledgeable practitioner before using any supplements, especially if you take other medications. Be aware also that even natural supplements, such as Melatonin, replace the naturally-occurring sleep-inducing chemicals in the brain and if used over time actually make it more difficult for you to fall asleep because the brain begins to rely on the outside sources and actually produces less of its own naturally-occurring chemicals.
 15. **If pain is causing sleeplessness,** analgesics are more appropriate than sleeping pills.
 16. **Improve relaxation** by relaxing tense muscles or a racing mind through using deep relaxation techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation or guided visualization. Get an auto-reverse recorder that can play a tape in a continuous loop.
 17. **If you suspect emotional problems are causing sleeplessness,** consult a competent therapist. Depression and anxiety disorders commonly produce insomnia. Getting more emotional support and expressing your feelings often will help you sleep.

~ Tips are from the National Sleep Foundation, www.sleepfoundation.org and The Anxiety & Phobia Workbook, by Bourne. This handout was distributed by Ascension Counseling Center, located in Gonzales and Donaldsonville. 225/621-5775.

