Sleep Restriction Therapy

Sleep restriction therapy is a behavioural treatment for insomnia that works to decrease variability in the timing of sleep while increasing the depth of sleep. The goal is to shorten the amount of time spent in bed in order to consolidate sleep.

Sleep Restriction Therapy: The Good News and Bad News.

The good news is that it works. Research has shown that sleep restriction therapy is the most effective sleep hygiene technique available. It works as well as medication with a longer lasting effect.

The bad news is that it takes several weeks of diligent dedication to alter your sleep schedule in order to see results. You may feel sleepier and experience more disruptive sleep initially. Stick with it and your insomnia will improve.

## Sleep Restriction Therapy Instructions

### Step 1: Determine your allowed time in bed

Begin by staying in bed for only the average amount of time you are actually currently sleeping. This can be calculated by keeping a sleep log for two weeks. Total up the average number of hour you slept each night and this is your Average Total Sleep Time (ATST) add 30 minutes to your ATST. This may mean that you are only allowed to stay in bed for 5 hours per night.

\[
\text{Time in bed} = \text{Average Total Sleep Time} + 30 \text{ mins}
\]

### Step 2: Set a wake time

Wake-up at the same time every morning no matter how much sleep you had the night before.

### Step 3: Set a bed time

Your bed time is determined by counting back from your wake time the amount of time in bed you were allowed in step 1. For example if your time in bed was 6 hours and you have set your wake time for 6 am, your bed time is 12 midnight. You should not get into bed before midnight even if you are sleep and think you can sleep.

### Step 4: Stick to this schedule for at least 2 weeks

If your are sleeping relatively well for most nights and you feel good during the day, keep this schedule. If you are feeling tired during the day, add another 15 minutes to your time in bed. You can increase your time in bed by 15 minutes per week until you are sleeping better at night and feel good during the day.

### Step 5: Use bright lights in the morning and dim lights in the evening.

Bright lights is the most powerful controller of the sleep wake cycle. Using light will help retune a normal sleep/wake pattern, and trying sleep restriction therapy without bright lights is not nearly as successful. Using light for 30 minutes upon waking is sufficient to regulate the sleep/wake cycle. You can go outside for natural sunlight or purchase a light box.

### Step 6: Avoid napping

This will decrease nighttime sleep drive.

### Step 7: Practise good sleep hygiene

Please refer to the sleep hygiene guidelines.