How is Your Sleep Affecting Your Mood?

Studies show that poor sleep adversely affects daytime mood and performance. Persistent insomnia is associated with a higher risk of developing clinical anxiety or depression.

Tips to Help Improve Your Sleep

#1 Avoid Caffeine, Alcohol, Nicotine, and Other Chemicals that Interfere with Sleep
Avoid caffeine (found in coffee, tea, chocolate, cola, and some pain relievers) for four to six hours before bedtime. Similarly, smokers should refrain from using tobacco products too close to bedtime.

#2 Turn Your Bedroom into a Sleep-Inducing Environment
To achieve such an environment, lower the volume of outside noise with earplugs or a "white noise" appliance. Use heavy curtains, blackout shades, or an eye mask to block light, a powerful cue that tells the brain that it’s time to wake up.

#3 Establish a Soothing Pre-Sleep Routine
Ease the transition from wake time to sleep time with a period of relaxing activities an hour or so before bed.

#4 Go to Sleep When You’re Truly Tired
If you’re not asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed, go to another room, and do something relaxing, like reading or listening to music until you are tired enough to sleep.

#5 Use Light to Your Advantage
Natural light keeps your internal clock on a healthy sleep-wake cycle.

#6 Keep Your Internal Clock Set with a Consistent Sleep Schedule
Waking up at the same time each day is the very best way to set your clock, and even if you did not sleep well the night before, the extra sleep drive will help you consolidate sleep the following night.

#7 Nap Early—Or Not at All
If you must nap, it’s better to keep it short and before 5 p.m.

#8 Lighten Up on Evening Meals
Finish dinner several hours before bedtime and avoid foods that cause indigestion.

#9 Exercise Early
Exercise helps promote sleep if it is done several hours before sleep.

#10 Follow Through
If your sleep difficulties don’t improve through good sleep hygiene, you may want to consult your physician or a sleep specialist.

Excerpted from the Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School.