

AS@W...SLEEP AND DEPRESSION

How does depression affect sleep?

- Depressed mood can significantly impact sleep. Some people find it difficult to fall asleep or stay asleep. Others find that they wake up much earlier than usual and have trouble falling asleep. Some people find that they are sleeping much more than usual.
- Depression can also make sleep less restorative (or restful), so you wake up feeling fatigued.

How can a lack of sleep affect physical health?

- Fatigue due to inadequate sleep can worsen mood symptoms. It can be much more difficult to motivate yourself to engage in necessary self-care when you are feeling exhausted.
- It has been shown that improved sleep can help our bodies recover from physical health conditions.

What causes poor sleep?

- There is a two-way relationship: stress and low mood often disrupt sleep, and sleep disruption can lead to further stress and fatigue.
- Some medications for mood can impact sleep, making sleep less restorative or restful. Some people can become dependent on over-the-counter medications for sleep.
- Health conditions can also affect sleep due to underlying symptoms (such as pain), the treatments that are used to treat those conditions (such as medications), and worry about the health condition.

What is the economic burden associated with poor sleep?

- Poor sleep is associated with the increased use of health care services and products.



AS@W Antidepressant Skills at Work Dealing with Mood Problems in the Workplace

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- ❑ Poor sleep and insomnia are associated with absenteeism and productivity loss at work.
- ❑ Insomnia and sleep-related difficulties have been found to cost the Canadian economy an estimated \$20 billion each year.

What can I do to help with my sleep problems?

❑ Set a regular sleep/wake schedule

- Having regular hours for getting up and going to bed can help set your “internal clock.”
- Most people are unaware of the importance of having a fixed wake-up time, to “jump-start” their internal clock.
- It is much more important to establish a fixed wake-up time than a bedtime: we can control what time we wake up, but can’t make ourselves fall asleep. If you’re having problems falling asleep, don’t go to bed too early – you shouldn’t get into bed until you’re sleepy.
- Also, it’s a good idea to eliminate daytime naps. If you’re having trouble sleeping at night, you may be tempted to have naps in the day – don’t! Short daytime naps, although of benefit for individuals who don’t have sleeping problems, can make sleep problems worse. Napping during the day will decrease the restorative value – or quality – of your sleep at night.
- Your goal is to increase the quality of sleep you receive at night, and one main way to do this is to condense all sleep to nighttime hours.

❑ Reduce sleep-interfering activities

- There are some common activities that actually disrupt sleep – it is good to limit these. Things to reduce are:
 - **Caffeine, alcohol and tobacco.** It’s particularly important to avoid these in the few hours before sleep, or if you wake during the night.
 - **Exercise before sleep.** Regular exercise can help your body get ready and prepared for sleep at night. However, avoid doing strenuous exercise in the few hours before sleep, as this may have the opposite effect.
 - **Watching TV or reading in bed.** If you read, keep the lights dim.



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❑ **Make your bedroom sleep-inducing**

- It can be helpful to create a pleasant environment for sleep.
- Create a comfortable bed with a good-quality mattress, pillow and linens.
- Use blinds or heavy curtains to create a dark room.
- If possible, and if weather permits, open the window a little to allow fresh air to circulate.
- Turn off phone ringers.
- Keep your bedroom a place for sleeping (or sex).

❑ **Practice good sleep hygiene. Make “going to bed” a soothing experience**

- Do not get into bed unless you are sleepy. If you’re tired and have had poor sleep the night before, it can be tempting to try to “catch-up” by getting into bed earlier. However, this can be counterproductive unless you’re already sleepy.
- If you are having trouble sleeping – or wake up and cannot go back to sleep – get out of bed. Do not do anything stimulating while awake. Do not eat, drink alcohol, or use tobacco. Try not to watch TV. Rather engage in a relaxing activity such as reading until you are drowsy and can return to bed.
- Create a pre-sleep routine that you follow each night, which helps you get “ready” for bed. A routine can help signal to your brain and body that it’s time to quiet down. This may include:
 - Some form of meditation or relaxation
 - A warm bath
 - Herbal teas
- Get yourself ready for the next day, dim the lights and then mentally “put away” any ongoing problems or upcoming tasks.



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References

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ABOUT AS@W

How was *Antidepressant Skills at Work* developed?

The guide was developed by British Columbia Mental Health and Addiction Services (BCMHAS), an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. The guide and accompanying materials have been authored by **Dr. Dan Bilsker**, **Dr. Merv Gilbert**, and **Dr. Joti Samra** – registered psychologists and scientist-practitioners with expertise in issues relating to workplace mental health. These psychologists are with the Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction (CARMHA), Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University. The guide was written on the basis of a review of the scientific literature; consultation with employers, unions, mental health providers and employee groups; and adaptation of existing self-care depression programs.

How can the manual be accessed?

The manual is available for viewing and free download at www.carmha.ca/antidepressant-skills/work/ or from www.bcmhas.ca/research. Individuals or organizations are free to print and make multiple copies of the guide, with permission from CARMHA (publications@carmha.ca). Print copies and audio CDs are available at a low cost from our ordering page at www.carmha.ca/ordering.

For further information about AS@W and associated resources and materials, please visit www.carmha.ca/selfcare. This information will be updated on a regular basis.



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