

# Sleep Restriction



Sleep restriction is an effective technique for treating insomnia. The aim of sleep restriction is to ensure that the time you spend in bed is actually devoted to sleeping – rather than spending time in bed awake, thinking, or worrying about not sleeping. Sleep restriction works by initially creating a mild sleep deprivation. Sleep happens naturally when we are tired (as long as our conscious mind does not get in the way), and so mild sleep deprivation promotes the onset of sleep, and increases the quality of the sleep that we get. In time it allows us to increase the amount of sleep that we get.

Sleep restriction aims to increase your **sleep efficiency**.

- Time that you spend **asleep in bed** is considered **efficient**.
- Time that you spend **awake in bed** is considered **inefficient**.

$$\text{Sleep efficiency} = \frac{\text{Time asleep}}{\text{Time in bed}} \times 100$$

For example:

6 hours asleep / 8 hours in bed = 75% sleep efficiency

9 hours asleep / 10 hours in bed = 90% sleep efficiency

## Sleep restriction instructions

### 1. Keep a sleep diary for a normal week

This will give you a baseline measure of your sleep. You will need to record:

- Time you went to bed.
- Time you got up.
- Number of hours of sleep.

### 2. Calculate your 'average total sleep time' (ATST)

This is the average number of hours you slept per night.

Add up the total hours of sleep you got in the past week, then divide the answer by 7.

### 3. Now restrict the *time you spend in bed* each night to your ATST

To do this you will need to:

- Decide what time you want to get up.
- Go to bed ATST-hours before then.
- Do not go to bed any earlier – even if you feel tired.



Getting up time  
e.g. 7:00am



Going to bed time  
e.g. 7:00am - 6 hours = 1:00am

### 4. Monitor your sleep efficiency

Continue to keep a sleep diary so that you can keep track of your sleep efficiency.

You should be aiming for 90% sleep efficiency.

### 5. Follow the rules to increase your total amount of sleep

Once you consistently reach 90% sleep efficiency allow yourself 15 minutes extra in bed by going to bed 15 minutes earlier.

## General rules

- Stick to your new schedule 7 nights per week – do not make exceptions or you will reduce the effectiveness of the technique.
- You must not allow any sleep outside your set hours – no napping!
- The minimum amount of sleep that you should be aiming for is 5 hours.

## Warning

- When you attempt sleep restriction **you should expect to be tired to begin with** – you should take this into account if you drive or operate machinery.
- Some people find it easier to begin implementing sleep restriction while they are on holiday (rather than being tired for work).