For many people whose complaints are:

“I don't sleep well!” or “It's hard for me to get to sleep!”

taking sleeping pills may help short-term but frequently they can end up doing more harm than good!

**Most authorities** on sleep recommend **against** use of sedative drugs by these people for the following reasons:

- Sedatives modify nervous system activity during sleep; for example, they may reduce the normal periods of dreaming. After taking sedatives for a while and then stopping, many people report they have sleep-disrupting dreams, which cause them to wake up feeling tired even after a full night's sleep.

- The human body develops tolerance to sedatives after their repeated use. After a while, you may have to take more and more sedatives to make you feel sleepy.

- A person can become psychologically dependent on sleeping preparations; if you are convinced that's the only way you can get a good night's sleep, you won't be able to go to sleep without a drug.

**Non-Drug Aids to Sleep**

Before asking your pharmacist or your doctor for something to help you sleep, give the following suggestions a fair try:

1. **Go to bed and rise at the same time everyday.** Establishing a schedule helps regulate your body's inner clock. Also try to establish a “sleep routine” by following the same bedtime preparations each night, thereby telling yourself it's bedtime before you get into bed.

2. **Make sure your sleeping conditions, including your bed, are as comfortable as possible.** If you are sharing your bed with a snoring, cover-stealing, or restless partner, make separate, temporary sleeping arrangements until you re-establish a satisfactory sleeping pattern.

3. **Wear loose-fitting nightclothes.** The more comfortable you are, the better you will sleep.

4. **Keep your bedroom darkened.** If street lights shine in your room or if you must sleep during the day, get room-darkening shades or blinds.

5. **Keep your bedroom as quiet as possible.** If you can't block outside noise, ”cover” it with a familiar inside noise such as the steady hum of a fan or other appliance.

6. **Avoid taking an alcoholic drink, including beer or wine, before bedtime.** When alcohol wears off during the night, you may experience periods of wakefulness.

7. **Avoid too much mental stimulation during the hour or so prior to bedtime.** Read a “light” novel or
watch a relaxing TV program: don't finish office work or discuss family finances with your spouse, for example.

8. **Avoid using your bedroom for working or watching television.** Learn to associate that room with sleep.

9. **If you can't sleep, get up and pursue some relaxing activity,** such as reading or knitting, until you feel sleepy; do not lie in bed worrying about getting to sleep.

10. **Avoid daytime napping,** which tends to fragment sleep at night.

11. **Avoid all caffeine-containing beverages after lunch.** Remember that many soft drinks, as well as coffee and tea, contain caffeine.

12. **Try to get some exercise each day.** Regular walks, bicycle rides, or whatever exercise you enjoy may help you sleep better!

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**Good Sleep Hygiene Tips!**

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