Don't count sheep: Get back to sleep

Waking up for a few moments in the middle of the night is normal, but sometimes it can be hard to get back to sleep.

Try these strategies to return to sleep quickly.

Banish your worries. If worrying keeps you awake, try a strategy called "worry time." Early in the evening, write down your worries and the best ways to solve them. Writing down solutions that you can look at the next day may help you let go of the worry so that you can sleep.

Hide your clock. Middle-of-the-night clock watching can make it harder to fall back asleep.

Get up. If you've been lying awake for 15 to 20 minutes, get out of bed and do something quiet and a little boring. Don't return to bed until you feel sleepy.

Practice good before-bed habits. Avoid caffeine and fluids close to bedtime, and if you drink alcohol, have no more than one drink at dinner, not later. Keep your bedroom quiet and the temperature comfortable. Use your bed for sleeping and sex only.

Keep a schedule. Do things that help you wind down at about the same time each night and go to bed at about the same time each night. Wake up at the same time every day.

If you have trouble for more than a few weeks falling back to sleep, talk to your doctor. This is especially important if you're often tired during the day or if you fall asleep when you need to be awake.

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