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Bright Light Therapy

For people with a delayed circadian sleep–wake phase, it can be impossible to fall asleep at bedtime. It can be just as hard to wake up in the morning in time for school or work. Light in the morning is one of the best ways to make sure that the circadian rhythm is set to the correct time. Bright light therapy can teach your body to have a circadian rhythm that is matched with your school or work schedule. Here is how it works:

- **First, you need to wake up at about the same time every morning** (even on weekends!). For you this wake-up time should be _____.
- **Next, you need to have about the same bedtime every night.** This needs to be late enough that you can fall asleep in 30 minutes or less. It also needs to be early enough so that you get enough sleep at night. Your bedtime should be _____.
- **Every morning (7 days a week) when you wake up, you should sit about 12 to 18 inches from the light box** (or wear a light visor if you choose to buy a visor) for about 30 minutes each day.
- **If not using a visor, you may place the light box on a counter** while sitting in front of it. Light that comes from just above your eye level tends to work better on your internal clock.
- **Do not sit and stare at the light.** Instead, do something in front of the light (e.g., eat breakfast, read, watch TV, play a video game). Every once in a while, you may quickly glance toward the light box. Do not look directly at the light. This can give you headaches or eye problems.
- **Remember that the time you use the light is very important.** If you oversleep by more than 30 minutes in the morning or forget to use the light box, skip it for that day. Then start using your bright light therapy again the next day.
- **Once you are falling asleep pretty quickly, you should begin to move your bedtime and wake-up time by 15 minutes earlier every 2 to 5 days** (or however long it takes you to start falling asleep quickly at the new time).

Following the schedule and using light therapy every single day will make a huge difference to both your sleep and how you feel during the day! With regular use, light therapy should help you feel more awake in the morning. This can help you "get going" faster and do better at school or work in the morning. You should also start to feel sleepier closer to your new bedtime, making it easier to fall asleep faster. This will allow you to slowly move your bedtime earlier. In turn, you should get more sleep at night and still wake up in time for school or work in the morning.