What's Normal and What's Not – Tips for Better Sleep

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1. Realize that waking up in the middle of the night is normal!
    a. We sleep in waves – light to deep and back to light
    b. Short periods of consciousness are OK –
    c. Wakefulness lasting longer than 30 minutes may signal concerns
2. Needing to pee triggers waking
    a. Waking once at night to urinate is considered normal
3. Waking more than once may signal onset of some health conditions, or:
    a. Excess intake of fluids during the day
    b. High intake in the latter part of the day
    c. Too much alcohol
    d. Possibly the need to change the timing of taking a diuretic medication
4. Overheating wakes you up
    a. Temperature regulation of the environment and the body can support sleep
        i. Keeping the room at 60-65°F and layers of removable covers helps
        ii. Having the room too hot or no way to change covers can cause awakening
    b. Taking a warm soak or warming up and then being in a cool space can trigger sleep
5. Too much screen time close to bedtime
    a. The blue light from devices keeps our brains from producing melatonin
    b. Melatonin is the brain/body sleep trigger
    c. Options are to stop using devices within 30 min of sleep, OR
    d. Keep devices at least 12-20 inches from your face/eyes
6. Alcohol near bedtime can cause rebound later
    a. Alcohol actually causes us to miss our REM cycle – most restful sleep
    b. Missing a part of the cycle increases the risk of later disruptions in the night
    c. A single drink earlier in the evening is much better for later sleep patterns

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7. Stress – at home or at work can disrupt sleep patterns and cause wakefulness
    a. Diaphragmatic breathing exercises before bedtime can help trigger calming
    b. Meditation or prayer can provide support for some
    c. Some benefit from cognitive-behavioral strategies to take charge of thinking patterns

5 Reasons You Keep Waking Up At Night an article by Kate Bayliss

Problems Staying Asleep: Why You're Waking Up In The Middle Of The Night an article by Amanda Chen revised