HAVING TROUBLE SLEEPING? Maybe it’s time for a wake-up call: You shouldn’t toss and turn and hope for the best rest. A good night’s sleep is essential for good health, as many studies have shown. It’s not just the amount of sleep that’s important either – quality counts too. Without both, people face a higher risk of heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, stroke, obesity and depression.

Fatigue affects work, relationships, and the ability to learn and remember. It is such a widespread problem in our sleep-deprived world that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has dubbed lack of sufficient slumber a public health epidemic, linked to car, plane and ship accidents – even nuclear reactor meltdowns.

**Slumberland basics**

For dreamy nights, take a close look at your sleep environment and habits. These simple tips may help you fall asleep and stay there:

**Keep a schedule.** Try to go to sleep and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends.

**Dim the lights.** Bright lights can interfere with the chemical melatonin, which helps the body grow drowsy and prepare for sleep. That’s why experts recommend not watching TV or using a computer right before bedtime.

**Keep it cool.** Sleep studies suggest that a cool room is best for sleeping. But keep warm covers handy: Middle-of-the-night shivers can shake you awake.

**Exercise, but time it well.** Regular exercise during the day promotes better sleep, but strenuous activity too close to bedtime can leave the body too revved up for relaxation.

“As simple as it sounds, one of the best tips is to avoid forcing yourself to try to fall asleep,” says Marek Martynowicz, MD, a pulmonologist and sleep medicine physician at Providence Sleep Disorders Center. “This only makes falling asleep more difficult. After 15 or 20 minutes of not being able to sleep, it is best to get up and engage in a relaxing activity, such as reading a book or listening to music. Then return to bed once you feel drowsy.”

If you continue to have trouble sleeping, talk with your doctor. There are many treatable disorders – including restless legs syndrome and sleep apnea – that can leave you foggy and exhausted, even after hours in bed. Your doctor may recommend a sleep study to diagnose a sleep disorder.

If you have concerns about your sleep, a sleep study may help diagnose a sleep disorder. To learn more, call the Providence Sleep Disorders Center at 907-212-3650.