

CBT-I Patient: I am not achieving a regular sleep schedule of 9:00 pm earliest lights out and 4:00 am latest arising time based on my average of 6 hours of sleep and a typical 4:00 am final wake-up time. Instead, I am crashing/sleeping hard most nights between 6-8 pm. Do you have suggestions?

CBT-I Clinician: Crashing hard for two hours between 6-8:00 pm on most nights is highly atypical for insomnia patients, both in terms of timing and duration of sleep. Insomnia patients, as discussed in the program, can rarely nap yet this early sleep would qualify as a nap. Further, it is rare for even normal sleepers to nap for two hours since most naps are 30-60 minutes. This is much more likely to be seen in patients with sleep apnea so an evaluation at a sleep center may be warranted if CBT-I does not improve your sleep.

It is also atypical to sleep at 6:00 pm because the sun is up and body temperature is just reaching its peak. This means it is very difficult to fall asleep at 6:00 pm, particularly for two hours regularly. Besides sleep apnea, you may have an extremely advanced body temperature circadian rhythm that is dropping too early at night. Therefore, walk outside at 5:00 pm to get sunlight or increase bright light exposure at 5:00 pm by sitting near a western exposed window for 30 minutes. Additionally, exercise at 5:00 pm such as a brisk walk will delay the drop in body temperature. Also, be more active to ward off early evening drowsiness between 6-8 pm: walk around, don't sit in a recliner, stand up every 10 minutes, etc.