

Sleep Hygiene

Tips for a better night's sleep

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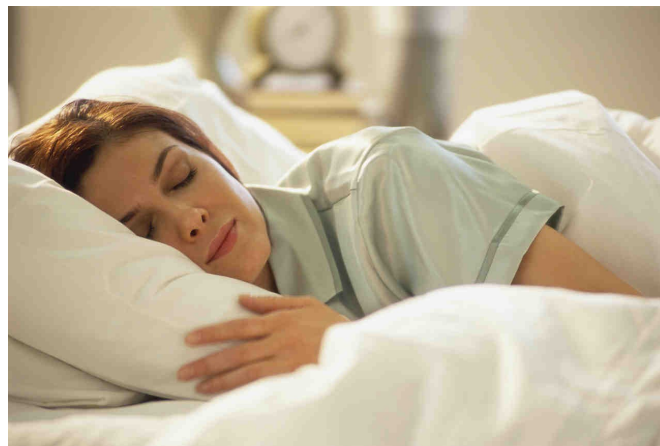
Below are some essentials of good sleep habits. Many of these points will seem like common sense. But it is surprising how many of these important points are ignored by many of us

Your Personal Habits

Fix a bedtime and waking time. Do not allow bedtime and wake time to drift. The body gets used to falling asleep at a certain time, but only if this is relatively fixed. Even if retired or not working, this is an essential component of good sleeping habits.

Avoid napping during the day. If you do it is no wonder that you will not be able to sleep at night. The late afternoon for most people is a "sleepy time." Many people will take a nap at that time. This is generally not a bad thing to do, provided you limit the nap to 30-45 minutes and can sleep well at night.

Avoid alcohol 4-6 hours before bedtime. Many people believe that alcohol helps them sleep. While alcohol has an immediate sleep-inducing effect, a few hours later as the alcohol levels in your blood start to fall, there is a stimulant or wake-up effect.



Avoid caffeine 4-6 hours before bedtime. This includes caffeinated beverages such as coffee, tea and many sodas, as well as chocolate.

Avoid heavy, spicy, or sugary foods 4-6 hours before bedtime. These can affect your ability to stay asleep.

Exercise regularly, but not right before bed. Regular exercise, particularly in the afternoon, can help deepen sleep. Strenuous exercise within the 2 hours before bedtime, however, can decrease your ability to fall asleep.

Getting Ready For Bed

Try a light snack before bed. Warm milk and foods high in the amino acid tryptophan, such as bananas, may help you to sleep.

Practice relaxation techniques before bed. Relaxation techniques such as yoga, deep breathing and others may help relieve anxiety and

reduce muscle tension.

Don't take your worries to bed. Leave your worries about job, school, daily life, etc., behind when you go to bed.

Establish a pre-sleep ritual. Pre-sleep rituals, such as a warm bath or a few minutes of reading, can help you sleep.

Your Sleep Environment

Always use comfortable bedding.

Find a comfortable temperature and keep the room well ventilated. If your bedroom is too cold or too hot, it can keep you awake. A cool bedroom is often the most conducive to sleep.

Block out all distracting noise, and eliminate as much light as possible.

Reserve the bed for sleep and sex. Don't use the bed as an office, workroom or recreation room.

Get into your favorite sleeping position. If you don't fall asleep within 15-30 minutes, get up, go into another room, and read until sleepy

A Word About Television

Many people fall asleep with the television on in their room. Watching television before bedtime is often a bad idea. Television is a very engaging medium that tends to keep people up. We generally recommend that the television not be in the bedroom. At the appropriate bedtime, the TV should be turned off and the patient should go to bed. Some people find that the radio helps them go to sleep. Since radio is a less engaging medium than TV, this is probably a good idea.

Other Factors

- Several physical factors are known to upset sleep. These include arthritis, acid reflux, menstruation, headaches and hot flashes.
- Psychological and mental health problems like depression, anxiety and stress are often associated with sleeping difficulty
- Many medications can cause sleeplessness
- To help overall improvement in sleep patterns, your doctor may prescribe sleep medications for short-term relief
- Always follow the advice of your physician and other healthcare professionals.