



Sleep Hygiene

What is it? Sleep hygiene refers to environmental influences and health practices that may affect sleep quality. Poor sleep hygiene practices are associated with difficulty falling asleep and remaining asleep. Exercise, what and when you eat or drink, exercise habits and even the physical environment of your bedroom affect your sleep.

Hints to assist you in improving your “Sleep Hygiene”

- Get up and go to bed at the same time every day. This includes weekends. If your sleep cycle has a regular rhythm, you will feel better.
- Use sunlight to set your biological clock. As soon as you get up in the morning, go outside and turn your face to the sun for 15 minutes.
- Don't take naps. If you feel you must nap, limit it to less than one hour before 3PM.
- Sleep only when sleepy. This limits the time you remain awake in bed.
- Falling asleep within 20 minutes is your goal and if you are unable to do so, get up and do something boring until you feel sleepy.
- Regular mild to moderate exercise is recommended to help you sleep. Your exercise routine should stop 4 hours prior to bedtime.
- Reserve the bedroom for sleep and sexual activities. Light reading may help you fall asleep but reserve this activity for elsewhere in the house and do not watch TV in bed. Avoid reminiscing about the day's events.
- Make sure your bedroom is quiet and comfortable. A cool room with blankets to stay warm is recommended. If light bothers you, you may want to get a sleep mask. Ear plugs or ‘White Noise’ may help.
- Having a light snack before bed may help as an empty stomach can interfere with sleep. Dairy products and turkey contain Tryptophan which acts as a natural sleep inducer. Chamomile tea may also be helpful.
- Stay away from caffeine or nicotine at least 4-6 hours prior to bedtime. Caffeine and Nicotine are stimulants that interfere with your ability to fall asleep.
- Develop sleep rituals using some of the above suggestions or try establishing some of your own to use 30 minutes prior to sleep. Additional suggestions include brushing your teeth, saying a prayer, and meditation

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- It is suggested that you keep a sleep log to evaluate your progress and the effectiveness of your rituals. They are not engraved in stone and you can change them and try new ideas. Keep track of the time you go to bed and the time you arise. Did you follow the ritual? Did you nap? Rate the quality of your sleep and the number of times you awakened. Did you exercise and when? Did you smoke or drink caffeine? Did you have nightmares? Do you feel rested when you awoke. How many times did you awaken during the night? How many hours did you sleep? It is helpful to have this information when you see your provider about your sleep. It is also important for you to remember that quality sleep is usually the last thing to return to a state of balance after you have stopped using drugs and alcohol.