

Sleep Hygiene

Our sleep conditions could be improved by keeping certain behaviors and that are similar to the concept of personal hygiene. Maintaining personal hygiene is to avoid the contact of virus or bacteria and to promote health; while sleep hygiene is to avoid behaviors that create sleep disturbances and to promote better sleep.

Try the following behaviors:

- Sleep only when sleepy
This reduces the time you are awake in bed.
- If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up and do something boring until you feel sleepy
Sit quietly in the dark or read the manual of the TV. Don't expose yourself to bright light while you are up.
The light gives cues to your brain that it is time to wake up.
- Don't take naps
This will ensure you are tired at bedtime. If you just can't make it through the day without a nap, sleep than one hour, before 3 pm.
- Get up and go to bed the same time every day
Even on weekends. When your sleep cycle has a regular rhythm, you will feel better.
- Refrain from exercise at least 4 hours before bedtime
Regular exercise is recommended to help you sleep well, but the timing of the workout is important.
Exercising in the morning or early afternoon will not interfere with sleep. Stretching and relaxation exercise do not count.
- Develop sleep rituals
It is important to give your body cues that it is time to slow down and sleep. Listen to relaxing music, read some thing soothing for 15 minutes, have a cup of caffeine free tea, do relaxation exercises.
- Only use your bed for sleeping
Refrain from your bed to watch TV, do work or reading. So when you go to bed your body knows it is time to sleep.
- Stay away from caffeine, nicotine and alcohol at least 4-6 hours before bed
Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants that interfere with your ability to fall asleep. Coffee, tea, coke, cocoa, chocolate and some prescription and non-prescription drugs contain caffeine. Cigarettes and some drugs contain nicotine. Alcohol may seem to help you sleep in the beginning as it slows brain activity, but you will end up having fragmented sleep.
- Have a light snack before bed
If your stomach is too empty, that can interfere with sleep. However, if you eat a heavy meal before bedtime, that can interfere as well. Dairy products contain a substance which acts as a natural sleep inducer.
- Take a hot bath 90 minutes before bedtime
A hot bath will raise your body temperature, but it is the drop in the body temperature that may leave you feeling sleepy.
- Make sure your bed and bedroom are quiet and comfortable
A hot room can be uncomfortable. A cooler room along with enough blankets to stay warm is recommended.
If light in the early morning bothers you, get a blackout shade or wear a slumber mask. If noise bothers you, wear earplugs or get a "white noise" machine.
- 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.