

# Sleep Hygiene

## General Information

Bedtime hygiene often consists of washing your face and brushing your teeth.

Sleep hygiene refers to the sleep habits that you develop over a period of time.

Good sleep habits promote restful sleep and daytime alertness. They can also prevent the development of sleep problems and disorders.

Try 1 to 2 of these at a time and add more once you have a routine.

## Good Sleep Hygiene

You can create good sleep hygiene by doing the following.

- Get regular exercise, but not right before bed. Regular exercise, especially in the afternoon, can help deepen your sleep. Strenuous (heavy) exercise within 4 hours before bedtime can decrease your ability to fall asleep because your body is too stimulated.
- Find a good temperature for sleeping. A bedroom that is too cold or too hot can keep you awake. A cool bedroom is often the best temperature for sleeping.
- Go to bed only when you are tired and get into your favorite sleeping position. If you can't fall asleep right away, leave the room and find something quiet to do (such as reading). When you are tired, go back to bed and try to fall asleep.
- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. Your body works on a rhythm, which means it needs to go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day. Get up when your alarm goes off. Avoid hitting the snooze button.  
  
Hitting the snooze button many times causes you to feel more tired than if you just get up, even on weekends or vacation. Keep a regular schedule during the week to help your body establish on a normal pattern and make you feel more alert.
- Avoid taking naps during the day. A daytime nap might make you feel better at the time, but it can cause problems for nighttime sleep. If you do nap, limit the time to 1 nap of less than 1 hour. Do not nap later than 3 p.m.
- Avoid eating a heavy meal or spicy foods before bedtime. If you are hungry at bedtime, eat a light snack (such as a glass of warm milk or cheese and crackers).
- Avoid drinking alcohol 4 to 6 hours before bedtime. Alcohol can make you feel sleepy right after drinking it, but a few hours later when the alcohol levels in your blood start to fall, your body becomes alert or stimulated.
- Avoid drinking or eating caffeine. Caffeine is a stimulant. Beverages such as coffee, tea and many sodas, and food such as chocolate, make your body more alert. Caffeine may not only affect how quickly you fall asleep, but it also affects the quality of your sleep.

*(over)*

- Avoid nicotine before bed. Nicotine is a stimulant and can make it harder for you to fall asleep. Nicotine withdrawal during sleep can disrupt healthy sleep patterns. Quitting smoking or cutting down on tobacco can help you fall asleep easier and prevent waking up fewer times each night.
- Don't check emails, the internet or social media on electronic devices in bed.
- Remove kids and pets from your bed.
- Use your bed only for sleep and sex. Let your body "know" that the bed is for sleeping.
- Avoid noise and bright rooms. Distractions can keep you from relaxing. Consider putting up darkening shades on the windows, wearing earplugs, or using a white noise machine if you live in a noisy neighborhood.
- Avoid watching the clock. Lying in bed unable to sleep and getting frustrated makes matters worse. If you keep looking at your clock, move it out of your bedroom or turn it around.
- Do not take your worries to bed. Try to find time to think and sort out problems earlier in the day. Keep a journal and write down your problems on a list. Star the more serious ones and work on how you will resolve them — during the day.
- Talk with your health care provider if you think you may have depression, anxiety or excessive stress. Problems getting to sleep or staying asleep can be signs of depression or anxiety.
- If you take medicine, ask your health care provider or pharmacist if the medicine may be causing sleep problems.

- If you work nights, cover your windows to block sunlight. This will help your body adjust.

## Getting Up in the Middle of the Night

Many people wake up at night for various reasons. If you need to get up to use the bathroom, try to use a night light to see, instead of turning on a main light. Bright lights can stimulate your body and may keep you from falling asleep.

If you get up in the middle of the night and can't get back to sleep, do not stay in bed. Leave the bedroom and do a quiet activity (such as reading). Do not do office work, housework or watch television. When you are tired, lie down again and you should be able to get back to sleep in about 20 minutes.

## Television

Many people have televisions in their bedrooms and fall asleep with the TV on. Watching TV before bed isn't a good idea because it can keep you up. It is not recommended that you have a TV in the bedroom. Having a radio on at bedtime (or a white noise machine) is a better option than TV.

Talk with your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns about your sleep patterns.

**Statistics adapted from  
the American Academy  
of Sleep Medicine.**