SLEEP HYGIENE

* Avoid napping during the day; it can disturb the normal pattern of sleep and wakefulness. If you just can't make it through the day without a nap, sleep less than one hour, before 3 pm.
* Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol too close to bedtime. While alcohol is well known to speed the onset of sleep, it disrupts sleep in the second half as the body begins to metabolize the alcohol, causing arousal.
* Exercise can promote good sleep. Vigorous exercise should be taken in the morning or late afternoon. A relaxing exercise, like yoga, can be done before bed to help initiate a restful night's sleep.
* Food can be disruptive right before sleep; stay away from large meals close to bedtime. Also dietary changes can cause sleep problems, if someone is struggling with a sleep problem, it's not a good time to start experimenting with spicy dishes. And, remember, chocolate has caffeine.
* Ensure adequate exposure to natural light. This is particularly important for older people who may not venture outside as frequently as children and adults. Light exposure helps maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle. As soon as you get up in the morning, go outside and turn your face to the sun for 15 minutes.
* Establish a regular relaxing bedtime routine. Try to avoid emotionally upsetting conversations and activities before trying to go to sleep. Don't dwell on, or bring your problems to bed.
* Associate your bed with sleep. It's not a good idea to use your bed to watch TV, listen to the radio, or read. 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 warranty on your refrigerator. 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.
* Make sure that the sleep environment is pleasant and relaxing. The bed should be comfortable, the room should not be too hot or cold, or too bright.
* Go to bed at the same time each night and rise at the same time each morning.
* Take a hot bath 90 minutes before bedtime. A hot bath will raise your body temperature, but it is the *drop* in body temperature that may leave you feeling sleepy.