



Sleep Hygiene: Getting a Good Night's Sleep

Causes of poor sleep: stress, worry, racing mind, do-list, anxiety, asthma, lung disease, heart failure, depression, fibromyalgia, gastric reflux, hyperthyroid, medications, menopause, sleep apnea, pain, panic disorder, restless leg syndrome, itching, urinary incontinence, noisy or active sleep partner, hormone imbalance, neurotransmitter imbalance.

Drugs and medications that interfere with sleep: alcohol, antidepressants, beta blockers, caffeine, chemo, Tagamet, diuretics, nicotine, Dilantin, Sudafed, steroids, stimulants (such as ADD meds), stimulant laxatives, theophylline, some herbal remedies. Benzodiazepines, such as Klonopin, Ativan, Xanax, and Restoril then to block REM sleep, and therefore are not recommended for long term use.

Sleep Hygiene (Setting the conditions right for a good night's sleep).

- Take a "mini-vacation" one hour before bed.
 - This is your "golden hour" wind-down period.
 - Turn off all of your devices- the computer, TV, iPhone, iPad, etc. .
- Practice relaxation techniques and calming relaxing activities before bedtime: Soft music, deep breathing exercises, meditation, reading, or a calming app. Listen to a relaxing tape or CD- Kelley Howell for example.
- Also consider biofeedback, hypnosis, meditation, breath focus, and prayer.
- Paced respirations- take a deep breath and hold for 5 seconds, keep repeating, focus on the sound of the breath.
- Progressive muscle relaxation- tense and relax large muscle groups. Begin with the feet and work your way up to the facial muscles.
- Repetitive focus- Focus on a word, sound, prayer, phrase, muscle activity, or breath.
- Autogenic (imagery) training- imagine a peaceful environment and comforting body sensations, such as warmth and heaviness in the limbs and abdomen, and coolness on the forehead.
- Develop your own special comfort place that you can go back to in your mind every night.
- Try to get to bed at a reasonable hour- preferably by 10:00, but 11:00 at the latest.
- Avoid late afternoon naps.
- Avoid naps longer than 45 minutes unless you're sick or sleep deprived.
- Keep the lights low in the evening. Consider using candles before bedtime.
- Blue light blocking glasses. Available on Amazon. UVEX brand is good.
- Consider using an eye mask, and ear plugs if needed.
- Keep you bedroom cool.
- White noise, such as a fan, or a white noise device, like the "sleep-mate." You also have white noise apps available for your smartphone.
- Avoid alcohol for 3 hours before bedtime.
- Avoid late meal, large meals, and spicy foods before bedtime. Finish all eating about 3 hours before bed.
- Consider taking a hot bath before bed with Epsom salts or ancient minerals. You can also add to the tub ½ -1 cup baking soda, and 10 drops of Lavender oil.

- Keep a pad and pencil (or pen) at the bedside. Therefore if any thoughts pop up in the middle of the night, then write it down, be done with it, and go back to sleep.
- No caffeine (coffee, tea, soft drinks) after 2 pm.
- Limit coffee to 2 cups per day max.
- Quit smoking. It is a stimulant.
- Get the dogs and cats out of the bedroom.
- Bedroom only for sleeping and intimacy only. No TV in the bedroom. Do not use the bedroom for problem solving or doing work.
- Once you go to sleep, keep the bedroom as dark as possible.
- Get regular exercise- but not within 3 hours of bedtime.
- If your partner snores consider sleeping in a separate room or wear earplugs.
- If you wake up frequently to urinate, drink you fluids in the AM. Avoid fluids after 8 pm.
- Put the bedroom clock out of reach and facing away from you.
- Some people do better with a light snack before bed (glass of milk, chamomile tea).
- Go to bed and awaken at the same time every day