



SLEEP HYGEINE BASICS

1. **Don't go to bed unless you are feeling sleepy.** It sounds counterintuitive, but as you work through these steps, you should notice over time that you become sleepier around your desired bedtime. If you are not yet sleepy, do something else (read a book, listen to soft music, or browse through a magazine). Find something relaxing, but not stimulating, to calm your body and distract your mind. **Don't read, write, eat, watch TV, talk on the phone, or play cards in bed.**
2. **If you are not asleep after 20 minutes, get out of the bed and do something relaxing, not stimulating.** If you can, do this in another room. This is for the benefit of your spouse, if applicable, and because your bedroom should only be used for sleep or intimacy. It is not a place to go when you are bored. **Once you feel sleepy again, go back to bed.**
3. **Start rituals that help you relax each night before bed--** warm bath or hot shower, gentle stretching, meditation, a light snack or a few minutes of reading.
4. **Keep a regular schedule.** Consistent times for meals, medications, chores, and other activities keeps the inner body clock stable. Get up at the same time every morning, **even on weekends and holidays.**
5. **Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep nightly on a regular basis.** Allow the body to rest and recover overnight so you feel refreshed upon waking.
6. **Avoid taking naps,** but if you do keep it under 1 hour and never after 3PM.
7. **Avoid caffeine after lunch,** and limit or eliminate beer, wine, or any other alcohol intake within six hours of your bedtime. Many people feel alcohol helps them fall asleep, but it affects our sleep cycles negatively and the sleep remains disrupted.
8. **Avoid cigarettes** or any other source of nicotine in general, but especially right before bedtime.
9. **Avoid large meals prior to bedtime.**
10. Drink fluids throughout the day, but **avoid heavy fluid intake before bedtime.**
11. **Avoid intense exercise within six hours of your bedtime, but do get in regular daily exercise.** This is very beneficial for helping with sleep quality. Talk to your healthcare provider before you begin a new exercise program.
12. **Only use sleep aides very cautiously with the guidance of your healthcare provider, if needed.** Do not drink alcohol while taking sleeping pills. These are not correcting the actual cause of your sleep trouble, and therefore can sometimes create a vicious cycle of dependence.
13. **Do your best to minimize your stress.** If stress cannot be eliminated, ensure that you have a healthy way to reduce the effects of it each day, such as exercise, deep breathing, listening to music, or scheduled breaks to relax or meditate. Your bed is a place to rest, not a place to worry.
14. **Keep your bedroom cool, quiet, & dark.** The bedroom is a retreat for your brain and body to rejuvenate.
15. **See your healthcare provider** for symptoms like snoring loudly, waking with gasping or choking, or pausing in your breathing at night. Further investigation and evaluations may be important for your health.