

## How to Sleep Well

Nothing is more frustrating than difficulty sleeping. Tossing and turning. Your mind is racing, going over everything that happened today. Night noises keep you awake. There ARE things you can do! These tips are also known as "sleep hygiene."

### **1. Sleep only as much as you need to feel refreshed during the following day.**

Restricting your time in bed helps to consolidate and deepen your sleep. Excessively long times in bed lead to fragmented and shallow sleep. Get up at your regular time the next day, no matter how little you slept.

### **2. Sleep only when sleepy.**

This reduces the time you are awake in bed.

### **3. If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up and do something distracting and boring for 20-30 minutes or until you become sleepy.**

Sit quietly in a dimly lit room and read something distracting. 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.

### **4. Avoid screen time including phone, TV, computer, tablet for at least 1 hour prior to bed.**

### **5. Don't take naps if you have trouble sleeping at night.**

This will ensure you are tired at bedtime. If you just can't make it through the day without a nap, sleep less than one hour, before 3:00PM.

### **6. Get up and go to bed the same time every day.**

Even on weekends, and even if you haven't slept well the night before. When your sleep cycle has a regular rhythm, you will feel better.

### **7. 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.

### **8. 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 something soothing for 15 minutes, have a cup of caffeine-free tea, or do relaxation exercises.

### **9. Only use your bed for sleeping.**

Refrain from using your bed to watch TV, pay bills, do work or reading, so when you go to bed your body knows it is time to sleep. Sex is the only exception.

### **10. Stay away from caffeine at least 4-6 hours before bed.**

Caffeine (coffee, tea, cola, chocolate) are stimulants and can cause difficulty falling asleep, awakenings during the night, and shallow sleep. Even caffeine early in the day can disrupt nighttime sleep.

### **11. Avoid alcohol, especially in the evening.**

Although alcohol often seems to help tense people fall asleep more easily, it causes awakenings later in the night.

### **12. Smoking may disturb sleep.**

Nicotine is a stimulant. Try not to smoke during the night when you have trouble sleeping. Quitting altogether would be even better.

### **13. Eat regular meals and do not go to bed hungry.**

Hunger may disturb sleep. A light snack at bedtime may help sleep but avoid greasy or “heavy” foods. 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 and turkey contain tryptophan, which acts as a natural sleep inducer. Tryptophan is probably why a warm glass of milk is sometimes recommended.

### **14. Avoid excessive liquids in the evening.**

Reducing liquid intake will minimize the need for nighttime trips to the bathroom.

### **15. Take a hot bath or shower about 90 minutes before bedtime.**

A hot bath or shower will raise your body temperature, but it is the *drop* in body temperature afterward that may leave you feeling sleepy.

### **16. Make sure your bed and bedroom are quiet and comfortable.**

Make sure that your bedroom is at a comfortable temperature during the night. Excessively warm or cold sleep environments may disturb sleep. 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.

### **17. 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. Do **not** stare at the sun since this can damage your vision.

### **18. Don't take your problems to bed.**

Plan some time earlier in the evening for working on your problems or planning the next day's activities. Worrying may interfere with initiating sleep and produce shallow sleep.

### **19. Do not try to fall asleep.**

This only makes the problem worse. Don't engage in stimulating activity. If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up and do something distracting and boring for 20-30 minutes or until you become sleepy. Sit quietly in a dimly lit room and read something distracting.

### **20. Put the clock under the bed or turn it so that you can't see it.**

Clock watching may lead to frustration, anger, and worry which interfere with sleep.

### **21. Avoid naps.**

Staying awake during the day helps you to fall asleep at night.