

Sleep Hygiene: Good Habits for Better Sleep

Daytime Tips

- Wake up the same time every day. Set an alarm if you have to.
- Get out of bed right after you wake up. Too much time spent on bed can lead to more waking up at night.
- Limit daytime naps. They can make sleep at night more difficult.
- Eat regular, healthy meals. Eat at the same time every day. Three to four small meals are better than 1-2 large meals.
- Do not drink coffee, tea, sodas or cocoa after noon. They contain caffeine and can interfere with normal sleep.
- Do not drink alcohol after dinner. It may help you fall asleep faster, but makes sleep shallower later in the night. Alcohol can also make snoring and sleep apnea worse.
- Use caution when taking headache and cold medicines. Some contain stimulants that can affect sleep.
- Stop smoking. Cigarette smoking stimulates the body and makes sleep difficult.
- Increase or start doing daily exercise. Regular exercise helps to deepen sleep. The best time to exercise is early in the morning. Avoid heavy exercise 2 hours before sleep.

Nighttime Tips

- Get into bed only when you are sleepy.
- Do not use over-the-counter medications. They may help you fall asleep faster, but they do not help you get deeper sleep. They can also make snoring and sleep apnea worse.
- Develop a sleep ritual. Do something relaxing before bed such a reading or listening to music. This tells your body that it is time to settle down.
- A warm shower or bath an hour before bedtime can help you to fall asleep.

-
- If you tend to worry about things while lying in bed, make an effort to do your worrying outside of bed. Before going to the bedroom, make a list of things to deal with tomorrow.
 - If you are hungry at bedtime, eat a small snack or drink a glass of milk. Do not eat sugar snacks or chocolate or drink tea or coffee. Large meals before bedtime can worsen sleep.
 - Use your bed only for sleep or sexual activity. Do not do anything else in bed such as reading, watching TV, arguing, catching up on work, smoking, etc.
 - Keep the bedroom dark and the temperature comfortable.
 - Block out noise as much as possible. Occasional loud noises disturb sleep even in people who cannot remember them in the morning. The hum of a fan can help cover up some noise.
 - Do not watch the clock and worry about lost sleep. Turn the clock face away.

Do not try to force sleep. If you cannot fall asleep:

- Get out of bed
- Move to another room and watch TV, read or listen to soothing music until you are sleepy.
- Go back to bed.
- If you are still unable to sleep, get out of bed again and repeat the cycle until you are able to sleep.

Excerpt from NPF Publication – Mind, Mood & Memory