

Sleep Hygiene

Sleep disruption is common, especially during times when you may feel emotionally stressed. Anxiety, relentless replaying of the day's events, and heightened emotions may significantly interfere with your sleep.

Lack of sleep robs you of needed rest, making self-control of your emotions and behavior more difficult. Bringing sleep patterns under control and working at a consistent, stable pattern is critical to your health and well-being. Adequate rest is a necessity, not a luxury.

The most common cause of insomnia is a change in daily routine. For example: traveling, change in work/school hours, disruption of routine behaviors (eating, exercise, down-time, etc.), and relationship conflicts may cause sleep problems. Paying attention to sleep hygiene is the most important thing you can do to resume a good sleep pattern.

Do:

1. Go to bed at the same time each day.
2. Get up from bed at the same time each day.
3. Get regular exercise each day, preferably in the morning. There is a good evidence that regular exercise improves restful sleep.
4. Get regular exposure to outdoor or bright lights, especially in the late afternoon and winter.
5. Keep the temperature in your bedroom comfortable.
6. Keep the bedroom dark enough to facilitate sleep.
7. Keep the bedroom quiet and peaceful when sleeping.
8. Use your bed only for sleep.
9. Keep T.V.s, cell phones, and tablets out of the bedroom so they cannot be easily accessed at night.
10. Take medications as directed. It is often helpful to take prescribed sleeping medication 30-60 minutes before bedtime so they are causing drowsiness by the time you lie down.
11. Use a relaxation exercise just before going to sleep (relaxation recordings can be used for this purpose).
12. Keep your feet and hands warm; it's okay to wear socks and/or mittens to bed if needed.
13. Eat a small amount before bedtime so that you are not woken by hunger during the night. A small turkey sandwich or a glass of warm milk is a good choice.
14. Get up out of bed and read or listen to soothing music for a few minutes if you cannot get to sleep after 30 minutes.

Don't:

1. Exercise within an hour of going to bed.
2. Engage in stimulating activity (e.g. playing a competitive game, watching an exciting program on a screen, listening to exciting music) within an hour of going to bed.
3. Try to fall asleep while watching T.V., tablet, or phone.
4. Eat or drink items containing caffeine (coffee, soda, chocolate, non-herbal teas).
5. Drink alcohol to help you sleep.
6. Take another person's sleeping medication.
7. Go to bed too hungry or too full. See # 12 above.
8. Take over-the-counter sleeping medications without your doctor's knowledge. Some of these can be habit forming or interact with other medications.
9. Take naps during the day or sleep too late into the morning.
10. Try to force yourself to go to sleep. This tends to make your mind more alert and your body more restless. See # 13 above.

Some non-prescription strategies:

1. Chamomile tea
2. Melatonin: 1-3 mg for children. 1-6 mg for adults. Likely to work best if taken 3-4 hours before going to bed, but can be taken at bedtime. Do not take every night unless this is your doctor's advice. Can be especially helpful for correcting out of sync sleeping pattern (e.g. staying up late and sleeping in).

Also, check out a sleep website for kids www.sleepforkids.org/ and the National Sleep Foundation website: www.sleepfoundation.org