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# Sleep Hygiene - Tips on Sleeping Well



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**Sleep hygiene** is a variety of practices and habits which help us to achieve a good night's sleep. These are simple tips to improve your sleep. It is important to be consistent in these habits. They may not work immediately, but most patients will benefit by sticking with them and their effects will be felt over time.

- 1 Avoid cigarette smoking and taking caffeine (coffee, tea, chocolate, cola), spicy and sugary food 4 - 6 hours before sleep as these stimulants can keep you awake.



- 2 Avoid large meals or excessive water intake before bedtime. A full stomach or bladder makes it difficult to fall asleep.

- 3 Avoid alcohol. It may bring on sleep but it increases the number of awakenings later at night.



- 4 Turn your bedroom into a sleep-inducing environment – keep it quiet, dark, and cool. Limit bedroom activities to sleep and intimacy only. This helps your mind associate your bed with sleep.

- 5 Establish a soothing bedtime routine – such as taking a warm bath, having a light snack, or reading a book.



- 6 Keep to a consistent sleep schedule – going to bed and waking up at the same time every day helps to maintain the body’s “internal clock”. This also applies to weekends.



- 7 Nap early – or not at all. Keep it within 30 - 45 minutes if you must take a nap.

- 8 Don't be a night-time clock-watcher – Worrying about sleep increases stress and makes it harder to fall asleep. Place your clock out of sight.



- 9 If you are not asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed and engage in a quiet, restful activity such as reading or listening to music. Return to bed only when you feel sleepy. This also applies if you wake up in the middle of the night and have trouble falling back asleep.

- 10 Do regular exercise – and try to do it earlier in the day. Strenuous exercise in the late evenings may cause your body and mind to be over-active.



- 11 Sleep only as much as you need to feel refreshed. Getting too much sleep may cause sleep difficulties the next day.

- 12 If you do shift work, try to stay on the same schedule for at least 7 days.

