

Sleep Hygiene: Tips for better sleep.

The more of these you do, the better your sleep will be. These strategies are supported by up-to-date research on the neurobehavioural structure of good sleep.

1. Sleep only when sleepy.

This reduces the time you are awake in bed. If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up and do something boring until you feel sleepy. Sit quietly in the dark or read the warranty on your refrigerator. Be careful, not to expose yourself to bright light while you are up. The light gives cues to your brain that it is time to wake up.

2. Don't take naps

This will ensure you are tired at bedtime.

3. Get up and go to bed the same time every day

Even on weekends!

4. Refrain from exercise at least 4 hours before bed

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.

5. 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 herbal tea.

6. 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.

7. Stay away from caffeine, nicotine and alcohol 4 hours before bed

Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants that interfere with your ability to fall asleep. Coffee, tea, coke, chocolate and some prescription and non-prescription drugs contain caffeine. Cigarettes and some drugs contain nicotine. Alcohol may seem to help you sleep in the beginning as it slows brain activity, but you will end up having fragmented sleep.

8. Have a light snack before bed

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. Milk contains tryptophan, which acts as a natural sleep inducer. Try a warm glass of milk.

9. Take a hot bath 90 minutes before bedtime

A hot bath will raise your body temperature, but it is the *drop* in body temperature that may leave you feeling sleepy. Your body temperature drops when you get tired.

10. Make sure your bed and bedroom are quiet and comfortable

A cooler room along with just enough blankets to stay warm is recommended. If light bothers you, get a blackout shade or wear a mask. If noise bothers you, wear earplugs.

11. 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.