

Sleep Hygiene

1. Go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day. This will help set your natural biological clock. Exposure to bright natural light when you first wake up is also helpful to set your natural biological clock.

2. Use your bed for only sleep and sexual activity to help train your brain that if you are in your bed, you should be sleeping. Do not eat, work, or watch TV in bed. Do these activities outside of the bedroom. Leave bed if unable to fall asleep within 20 minutes and return when sleepy. If unable to leave the bed due to limited mobility or safety concerns, do something relaxing (ie, relaxation techniques) until sleepy and able to fall to sleep.

3. Develop a relaxing bedtime routine. This may include taking a warm bath, reading a book, meditation, or stretching. Avoid stimulating activities right before bedtime, including watching TV or discussing a stressful topic.

4. Avoid moderate to vigorous exercise at least 2-3 hours before bedtime. Exercising immediately before bedtime stimulates your body and brain, making it hard to fall asleep. There is evidence however that doing regular (preferably moderate to vigorous) exercise improves your sleep at night. Talk to your physical therapist about an appropriate exercise program.

5. Avoid caffeinated foods and drinks at least 4 hours before bedtime (includes most tea, coffee, chocolate, and soft drinks). Check the presence of caffeine in your drink or food by reading the label. Caffeine can cause difficulty falling asleep and increase the number of times you wake up during the night.

6. Refrain from drinking alcohol or smoking at least 3 to 4 hours before bedtime. Although people may think drinking alcohol causes relaxation before bedtime it can actually increase the number of times you wake up during the night and can cause you to wake up early. Nicotine in cigarettes acts as a stimulant that can cause difficulty falling asleep.



8. Avoid daytime napping so that you are tired at night and can fall asleep easily. If you feel you need to take a nap, limit the nap to 30 minutes and avoid napping in the evening.

9. Make your sleeping environment comfortable and relaxing. This includes avoiding too much light and disturbing noises. Stop using light emitting electronics (ie, television, computer, smartphone) at least 30 minutes before bedtime as the blue light that is emitted can disrupt sleep by suppressing melatonin production. Use ear plugs, light-blocking curtains, or an eye mask if needed. Also, keep the temperature comfortable. Being too warm or cold may disturb your sleep. Also, use a comfortable and supportive pillow and mattress.

10. Avoid eating a large meal or spicy food 2-3 hours before going to bed. Your digestive system slows down while you are sleeping, which can stimulate acid secretions that cause heartburn. A light snack may be helpful if you are hungry. Avoid excessive liquid 2-3 hours before bedtime.

11. Talk to your doctor or health professional if you still have trouble sleeping.