

SLEEP HYGIENE



We all have trouble with sleep every now and then. Here are some guidelines to help improve your sleep.



SET A SCHEDULE

One of the best ways to train your body to sleep well is to go to bed and get up at more or less the same time every day, even on weekends and days off! This regular rhythm will make you feel better and help your body know when it's time to go to sleep.



IMPLEMENT A BEDTIME RITUAL

You can develop a ritual to remind your body that it is time to sleep. Try to keep the ritual the same every night. Examples of common bedtime activities include: brushing your teeth, dimming the lights, reading, aromatherapy, and turning on relaxing music or sleep sounds/ambient noise.



KEEP YOUR BEDROOM COMFORTABLE

It will be difficult to sleep if you are not feeling relaxed or comfortable in your environment. Pay attention to temperature, lighting, and other factors in your bedroom which may be playing a role in keeping you awake. Make it a space that is conducive to sleep, rather than a place you avoid.



AVOID NAPPING

Avoid napping unless you must do so to keep yourself safe (e.g., operating heavy machinery or driving). Naps that are late in the afternoon or over an hour long are especially disruptive to sleep hygiene, making sleep more difficult at night. Think of napping like eating a big snack before dinner—it can ruin your “appetite” for sleep at bedtime.



STOP USING ELECTRONICS BEFORE BEDTIME

The blue light from our electronics acts like digital sunshine, encouraging the brain to be awake. Try to limit or stop your electronic use at least two hours before bedtime. If this is not possible, see if you can adjust your screen settings to night mode.



LIMIT CAFFEINE INTAKE

Caffeine is a stimulant and can keep you awake. In fact, caffeine stays in your system for several hours after you consume it. Consider limiting your consumption to no more than three cups of coffee per day, and do not consume caffeine in the afternoon or evening hours.



LIMIT ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Alcohol may initially make you feel drowsy or sleepy, but consuming alcohol can actually lead to broken and less refreshing sleep. This is known as the alcohol rebound effect: Alcohol in your bloodstream during sleep can lower your blood pressure—in response, adrenaline may kick in to regulate your body, which disrupts sleep.



AVOID LARGE MEALS OR DRINKS BEFORE BED

Eating a heavy meal or drinking a lot of water right before bed can lead to feelings of discomfort or frequent bathroom use. Try to limit your food intake at least two hours prior to sleeping to give your digestive system time to get ready for rest, too. If you are hungry right before bed, a light snack like milk, peanut butter, or cheese should be okay.



CALM YOUR MIND AND BODY

If you find it difficult to fall asleep due to anxiety or physical tension, practice relaxation techniques like mindful breathing, meditation, or progressive muscle relaxation before bed. Apps like Headspace and Calm can help you develop these skills. If these techniques don't ease your mind, try writing down all of your worries at least an hour before bedtime. Throw the list away (or delete the note) before you go to sleep.



DISCUSS YOUR SLEEP GOALS WITH YOUR BED PARTNER

Many people share their bed with partners, pets, or children, which can also affect the quality of your sleep. If you find your pet is waking you up every night, see if there is another arrangement that may work better. If you are having trouble sleeping due a bed partner's sleep behavior, discuss your sleep goals, and try to find a solution that works for you both.



INCREASE YOUR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Vigorous exercise is not recommended right before bed or when you can't sleep. However, increasing your physical activity during the day can assist with getting you to sleep in the evening.



TURN THE CLOCK AROUND

Checking a clock can lead to worry about not sleeping, which will make it harder to fall asleep. Do not try too hard to sleep—allow it to unfold naturally.

