

Sleep Hygiene Instructions

Sleep only as much as you need to feel refreshed during the following day.

Restricting your time in bed helps to consolidate and deepen your sleep. Routinely spending an excessively long time in bed leads to fragmented and shallow sleep. Get up at your regular time the next day, no matter how little you slept.

Get up at the same time each day, 7 days a week. A regular wake time in the morning leads to regular times of sleep onset, and helps to set your "biological clock."

Exercise regularly. Exercise makes it easier to initiate sleep and it helps to deepen sleep. Schedule exercise times so that they do not occur within 3 hours of when you intend to go to bed.

Make sure your bedroom is comfortable and free from disturbing light and noise. A comfortable, noise-free sleep environment will reduce the likelihood that you will wake up during the night. Noise that does not awaken you may also disturb the quality of your sleep. Carpeting, insulated curtains, and closing the door may help. Background white noise may block out other potentially disturbing noises.

Make sure that your bedroom is at a comfortable temperature during the night. Excessively warm or cold sleep environments may disturb sleep.

Eat regular meals and do not go to bed hungry. Hunger may disturb sleep. A light snack at bedtime (especially carbohydrates) may help sleep, but avoid greasy or "heavy" foods.

Avoid excessive liquids in the evening. Reducing liquid intake will minimize the need for nighttime trips to the bathroom.

Cut down on all caffeine products. Caffeinated beverages and foods (coffee, tea, cola, chocolate) can cause difficulty falling asleep, awakenings during the night, and shallow sleep. Even caffeine early in the day can disrupt nighttime sleep for some people.

Avoid alcohol, especially in the evening. Although alcohol helps tense people fall asleep more easily, it causes awakenings later in the night.

Smoking may disturb sleep. Nicotine is a stimulant. Try not to smoke during the night when you have trouble sleeping.

Don't take your problems to bed. Plan some time earlier in the evening for working on your problems or planning the next day's activities. Worrying may interfere with initiating sleep and produce shallow sleep.

Train yourself to use the bedroom only for sleeping and sexual activity. This will help condition your brain to see bed as the place for sleeping. *Do not* read, watch TV, or eat in bed.

Do not *try* to fall asleep. This only makes the problem worse. Instead, turn on the light, leave the bedroom, and do something different such as reading a book. Don't engage in stimulating activity. Return to bed only when you are sleepy.

Put the clock under the bed or turn it so that you can't see it. Clock watching may lead to frustration, anger, and worry, which interfere with sleep.

Avoid naps. Staying awake during the day helps you to fall asleep at night.

Adapted with permission from Perlis ML, Youngstead S. The diagnosis of primary insomnia and treatment alternatives. *Compr Ther.* 2000;26:298-306.