



Sleep Hygiene Guidelines

Sleep problems often have two parts: first, the medical or anatomical portion of your sleep problem and second, problems regarding your sleep environment and sleep habits. These guidelines are called “Sleep Hygiene” and are very important to improve your sleep.

- 1) Avoid reading, watching TV, eating, listening to the radio, etc. in bed. The bed is to be used for sleep and sex only. If not, we associate the bed with other activities and often it becomes difficult to fall asleep.
- 2) Minimize noise, light, and temperature extremes during the sleep period with ear plugs, window blinds, or an electric blanket or air conditioner. Both noise and light have been shown to disrupt falling asleep. Interestingly, if your room is too hot (above 75 degrees) or too cold (below 54 degrees) it can affect your sleep as well.
- 3) Try not to drink fluids after 8:00pm. This may reduce awakenings.
- 4) Nicotine is a stimulant. Thus, having a cigarette before bed, although it feels relaxing, is actually putting a stimulant into your blood stream. **IF YOU DO SMOKE, FOLLOW THESE SUGGESTIONS:** cut back 4 hours before bed, and no cigarettes 30-45 minutes before bed.
- 5) Caffeine is also a stimulant and should be discontinued 4-6 hours before bedtime. Caffeine is in coffee (100-200mg), soda (50-75 mg), iced tea, chocolate, and various over the counter medications. Caffeine stays in your system for up to 12 hours!!! Try not to have any past lunch time, and have decaffeinated coffee after dinner. **BE CAREFUL** if you consume large amounts of caffeine and you cut your self off too quickly. **YOU MAY GET HEADACHES** which will keep you awake.
- 6) Alcohol is a depressant; although it may help you fall asleep, it causes awakenings later in the night. As alcohol is digested your body goes into withdrawal from the alcohol causing nighttime awakenings, and often nightmares. Excessive alcohol use can lead to dependence and the withdrawal from alcohol dependence leads to poor sleep.
- 7) A light snack may be sleep inducing, but a heavy meal too close to bedtime interferes with sleep. Avoid protein. Stick to carbohydrates or dairy products. Milk contains the amino acid L-Tryptophan which has been shown in research to help people fall asleep. So, enjoy a tasty snack of milk and cookies or crackers (without chocolate), it may help you sleep.
- 8) If exercise stimulates you, don't work out before bed. Try exercising in the afternoon instead.