



SLEEP HYGIENE

Nothing is more frustrating than not being able to sleep. Tossing and turning. Your mind is racing, going over everything that happened today or yesterday or the day before. Worries about the future, the unknown.. Night noises keep you awake. Poor sleep habits (referred to as hygiene) are among the most common problems encountered in our society. Below are some essentials of good sleep habits.

Your Personal Habits

- **Fix a bedtime and an awakening time.** Do not be one of those people who allows bedtime and awakening time to drift and change. The body "gets used" to falling asleep at a certain time, but only if this is relatively fixed. Even if you are retired or not working. And even on weekends! When your sleep cycle has a regular rhythm, you will feel better.
- **Avoid napping during the day.** If you nap throughout the day, it is no wonder that you will not be able to sleep at night. The late afternoon for most people is a "sleepy time." If you just can't make it through the day without a nap, sleep less than one hour, before 3 pm.
- **Avoid alcohol 4-6 hours before bedtime.** Many people believe that alcohol helps them sleep. While alcohol has an immediate sleep-inducing effect, a few hours later as the alcohol levels in your blood start to fall, there is a stimulant or wake-up effect. Alcohol causes fragmented sleep.
- **Avoid caffeine 4-6 hours before bedtime.** This includes caffeinated beverages such as coffee, tea and many sodas, as well as chocolate, so be careful. OR BETTER, AVOID CAFFEINE ALTOGETHER or switch to Decaf.
- **Avoid heavy, spicy, or sugary foods 4-6 hours before bedtime.** These can affect your ability to stay asleep.
- **Avoid nicotine 4-6 hours before bedtime.**
- **Exercise regularly, but not right before bed.** Regular exercise, particularly in the afternoon, can help deepen sleep. Strenuous exercise within the 2 hours before bedtime, however, can decrease your ability to fall asleep.

Your Sleeping Environment

- **Use comfortable bedding.** Uncomfortable bedding can prevent good sleep. Evaluate whether or not this is a source of your problem, and make appropriate changes.
- **Find a comfortable temperature setting for sleeping and keep the room well ventilated.** If your bedroom is too cold or too hot, it can keep you awake. A cool (not cold) bedroom is often the most conducive to sleep.
- **Keep the lights low.** Use a book light, a glow pen, a lamp dimmer or carefully draped scarf to keep the room dim. Darkness keeps your melatonin hormone pumping so you can more easily return to rest and sleep.

- **Block out all distracting noise**, and eliminate as much light as possible. A cooler room along with enough blankets to stay warm is recommended. If light in the early morning bothers you, get a blackout shade or wear a slumber mask. If noise bothers you, wear earplugs or get a "white noise" machine.
- **Reserve the bed for sleep and sex.** Refrain from using your bed to watch TV, pay bills, do work, read or play video games. So when you go to bed your body knows it is time to sleep. Sex is the only exception.
- Birds need safe places to nest... just like you do during wakeful nights. Your **Night Nest** creates a safe place to wait, nurture, and renew until sleep returns with its dream morsels.
Start by creating your soothing insomnia environment—straighten papers and clothes monsters (dirty laundry on the floor). Find a spot near your insomnia bed or chair and place your Night Nest stash—items that soothe your eyes, ears, body, and heart as you lay awake. Generate an aura of night-comfort to help your Unconscious Mind expand its creative, healing, and restorative self. Your Night Nest can include your items for basic comfort, soft lights, writing and reading objects, soothers, and special talismans. Make it fit your desires and personality.

Getting Ready For Bed

- **Try a light snack before bed.** Warm milk and foods high in tryptophan, such as bananas or turkey, may help you to sleep. 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.
- **Practice relaxation techniques before bed.** Relaxation techniques such as yoga, deep breathing and others may help relieve anxiety and reduce muscle tension.
- **Don't take your worries to bed.** Leave your worries about job, school, daily life, etc., behind when you go to bed. Some people find it useful to assign a "worry period" during the evening or late afternoon to deal with these issues.
- **Establish a pre-sleep ritual.** 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 caffeine free tea, do relaxation exercises.
- **Warm/hot bath.** Some recommend 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.
- **Get into your favorite sleeping position.** If you don't fall asleep within 15-30 minutes, get up, go into another room, and read until sleepy.

Sleep only when sleepy

This reduces the time you are awake in bed.

Getting Up in the Middle of the Night

Most people wake up one or two times a night for various reasons. If you find that you get up in the middle of night and cannot get back to sleep *within 15-20 minutes*, then do not remain in the bed "trying hard" to sleep. Get out of bed and do

something boring until you feel sleepy. Leave the bedroom. Read, have a light snack, do some quiet activity, or take a bath. You will generally find that you can get back to sleep 20 minutes or so later. Do not perform challenging or engaging activity such as office work, housework, etc. Do not watch television. Sit quietly in the dark or read the warranty on your refrigerator. Don't expose yourself to bright light while you are up. The light gives cues to your brain that it is time to wake up.

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.

Word About Television

Many people fall asleep with the television on in their room. Watching television before bedtime is often a bad idea. Television is a very engaging medium that tends to keep people up. We generally recommend that the television not be in the bedroom. At the appropriate bedtime, the TV should be turned off and the patient should go to bed. Some people find that the radio helps them go to sleep. Since radio is a less engaging medium than TV, this is probably a good idea.

Other Factors

- **Several physical factors are known to upset sleep.** These include arthritis, acid reflux with heartburn, menstruation, headaches and hot flashes.
- **Psychological and mental health problems like depression, anxiety and stress are often associated with sleeping difficulty.** In many cases, difficulty staying asleep may be the only presenting sign of depression. A physician should be consulted about these issues to help determine the problem and the best treatment.
- **Release the Hold of Emotions.** Emotions are linked to our thoughts in a circular fashion—a belief can trigger an emotional response, and an emotional response can reinstate a belief. Too much feeling and thinking when we're trying to rest! Reduce the intensity of emotional distress using Energy Medicine, Tapping Techniques, and Wisdom Writing.
- **Many medications can cause sleeplessness as a side effect.** Ask your doctor or pharmacist if medications you are taking can lead to sleeplessness.
- **To help overall improvement in sleep patterns, your doctor may prescribe sleep medications for short-term relief of a sleep problem.** The decision to take sleeping aids is a medical one to be made in the context of your overall health picture.
- **The goal is to rediscover how to sleep naturally.**