

SLEEP HYGIENE

CAN'T SLEEP?



Nothing is more frustrating than not being able to sleep. Tossing and turning. Your mind is racing, going over everything that happened today. Night noises keep you awake. What can you do? There ARE things you can do! Read on and learn some new tricks to sleep well. These tips are also known as "Sleep Hygiene."

- **Sleep only when sleepy**

This reduces the time you are awake in bed.

- **If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up and do something boring until you feel sleepy**

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.

- **Don't take naps**

This will ensure you are tired at bedtime. If you just can't make it through the day without a nap, sleep less than one hour, before 3 pm.

- **Get up and go to bed the same time every day**

Even on weekends! When your sleep cycle has a regular rhythm, you will feel better.

- **Refrain from exercise at least 4 hours before bedtime**

Regular exercise is recommended to help you sleep well, but the timing of the workout is important. Exercising in the morning or early afternoon will not interfere with sleep.

- **Develop sleep rituals**

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.

- **Only use your bed for sleeping**

Refrain from using your bed to watch TV, pay bills, do work or reading. So when you go to bed your body knows it is time to sleep. Sex is the only exception.

- **Stay away from caffeine, nicotine and alcohol at least 4-6 hours before bed**

Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants that interfere with your ability to fall asleep. Coffee, tea, cola, cocoa, chocolate and some prescription and non-prescription drugs contain caffeine. Cigarettes and some drugs contain nicotine. Alcohol may seem to help you sleep in the beginning as it slows brain activity, but you will end up having fragmented sleep.

- **Have a light snack before bed**

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. Dairy products and turkey contain tryptophan, which acts as a natural sleep inducer. Tryptophan is probably why a warm glass of milk is sometimes recommended.

- **Take 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. Read about the study done on body temperature below.

- **Make sure your bed and bedroom are quiet and comfortable**

A hot room can be uncomfortable. 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.

- **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.