



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

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Sleep Hygiene Tips

Sleep Hygiene Dos

1. Set a Specific Sleep and Wake-Time and Stick to It

It is essential to establish a specific sleep-time and a wake-time. Prime your body for sleep and allow time to be a trigger for sleep and wake. This will allow your body to adjust your sleep cycles and ensure that you are getting efficient sleep and making time for restorative REM (dreaming) sleep.

2. Prepare for Restful Sleep

At least 20 minutes before bed, build in wind-down time. This may include a shower, reading, meditation or any activity that promotes relaxation.

3. Set Up an Environment Compatible with Sleep

It is also important to make sure that your sleeping area is clean, comfortable and free of distractions such as TV, cellphones, and computer screens. Make sure that the room is dark, cool, quiet, and overall promotes relaxing sleep.

4. Leave the Room When You Can't Sleep

It might seem perfectly logical to assume that if you are trying to sleep that you should stay in bed until sleep naturally happens. Unfortunately, this is exactly what you don't want to do. Staying in bed while awake conditions your body to associate bed with wakefulness.

Instead, when you struggle with a sleepless night, get up out of bed after 15 minutes of wakefulness. Use the time to wind-down. When you feel tired or after approximately 20 minutes, return to bed and try to fall asleep again. Repeat this strategy every 15 to 30 minutes until you fall asleep. You want to break the cycle of associating your bed with wakefulness.

5. Stay Awake until Your Scheduled Bedtime

Although you may feel tired during the day or in the early evening, do not change your established sleep-time too drastically. Keep yourself active to stay awake - such as laying out clothes for the next day, changing sheets, or light housework. Do not engage in behaviors that might promote alertness such as heavy exercise, television or electronic use, or stressful activities such as school or job-related activities.

6. Exercise in the Morning, Middle of the Day, or Afternoon

Exercise is a healthy way to increase positive mood. It also increases the drive for sleep later on. Exercise may include taking long walks at a moderate pace, running, weight training, bike riding, yoga, or playing sports. Exercise reduces stress, boosts energy, and promotes restful sleep at night.

Sleep Hygiene Don'ts

1. Don't Exercise, Smoke Marijuana, or Drink Caffeine/Alcohol before Bed

Although exercise can assist with mood and sleep when integrated into your schedule appropriately, exercise before bed can increase alertness and keep you awake.

Alcohol and other drugs can drastically affect sleep, and alcohol reduces the amount of restorative sleep you get. For example, a lot of people believe that alcohol helps them get better sleep when in fact, alcohol is a short-term solution that may allow you to fall asleep but actually, it negatively impacts your sleep quality, which you will learn is just as important as the amount of sleep you get. Caffeine can also significantly impair sleep.

Caffeine can be a powerful stimulant and is metabolized at different rates in different people. Especially if consumed late in the day (i.e., past 3 pm) caffeine can significantly affect your sleep. It is best to stop caffeine intake around noon or 1 pm, as some people are very slow metabolizers of caffeine. Caffeine can also be found in common over-the-counter pain medications (e.g., Excedrin) and in foods like chocolate, and ice cream. Even decaf coffee and soda contain some amount of caffeine.

Marijuana may put some people to sleep; however, it decreases the quality of REM sleep. Do not smoke or consume cannabis 3 to 4 hours before bed.

2. Don't Take Naps During the Day

When you feel tired, it makes sense that you might want to take a nap. But unscheduled and frequent naps can throw off your body's biological clock and natural sleep rhythms. When napping, individuals who sleep well primarily fall into early sleep stages and wake up refreshed after approximately 20 to 30 minutes. When someone is having sleep difficulties, they often immediately fall into deep sleep, which is the body's attempt to use that time

most efficiently. However, this results in feeling groggy when you wake up and sometimes worse than you fell asleep! The benefits of a nap depend on a good night sleep to start with, if you aren't sleeping well to begin with a nap will do more harm than good.

3. Don't Make Bed a Place of Worry

Sleep hygiene is designed to re-condition your body for sleep and create an environment that promotes sleep. If you get in bed and start to re-evaluate the day or worry about the upcoming day, bed and sleep-time can become associated with anxiety rather than restfulness. If you find yourself beginning to worry, get out of bed and make a list, practice reappraisal or engage in restful relaxing behavior until you feel tired again.

4. Don't Sleep In

Like napping, sleeping in throws off your body's expectations and ability to regulate sleep cycles. Setting up a consistent sleep and wake time allows for regulation of sleep cycles. Even if you still feel tired in the morning upon waking, get out bed and begin your day.

5. Don't Engage in Wakeful Activities in Bed

Your bedroom is a comfortable and relaxing place. The bed should only be used for sleep and sexual activity. Don't use the bed for anything else.

6. Don't Watch TV or Use Electronics

Light triggers the regulation of your circadian rhythms and can affect your natural sleep cycles. This is primarily from sunlight, but unfortunately smartphones, tablets, televisions, and computer screens emit light that can disrupt your sleep cycles. Distance yourself from these electronics at least 60 minutes before your scheduled sleep time; it may also be useful to dim the lights in the house and especially the bedroom before bed. It may even be helpful to put the phone in a drawer or in another room to limit the temptation to check things before bed. Remember, healthy sleep is the priority.

7. Don't Watch the Clock

Sometimes the mere fact that you are not sleeping can be enough to keep you awake. This can be especially true when there are important responsibilities the next day. This can lead to "clock watching" and increasing anxious thoughts related to the limited time for restful sleep. It can be extremely helpful to keep clocks and alarm clocks in a separate room or turn them away and resist the temptation to look at them. Clock watching will not help you sleep – it will only make things worse.