

Sleep Hygiene

What is Sleep Hygiene?

'Sleep hygiene' is the term used to describe good sleep habits. Considerable research has gone into developing a set of guidelines and tips which are designed to enhance good sleeping, and there is much evidence to suggest that these strategies can provide long-term solutions to sleep difficulties.

1. **Get regular.** Go to bed and get up at more or less the same time every day, even on weekends and days off!
2. **Get up & try again.** Go to sleep only when tired. If you haven't been able to fall asleep after 30 minutes, get up and do something calming (not stimulating) until you feel sleepy, then return to bed and try again.
3. **Avoid caffeine & nicotine.**
Avoid consuming any caffeine (coffee, tea, soda, chocolate) or nicotine (cigarettes) for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed. These act as stimulants and interfere with falling asleep.
4. **Avoid alcohol.** Avoid alcohol for at least 4-6 hours before bed because it interrupts the quality of sleep.
5. **Bed is for sleeping.** Do not use your bed for anything other than sleeping and sex, so that your body comes to associate bed with sleep.
6. **Electronics Curfew.** Don't use back-lit electronics 60 minutes prior to bed, as the artificial light prevents hormones and neurons that promote sleep.
7. **The right space.** Make your bed and bedroom quiet and comfortable for sleeping. An eye mask and earplugs may help block out light and noise.
8. **No naps.** Avoid taking naps during the day. If you can't make it through the day without a nap, make sure it is for less than an hour and before 3pm.
9. **Sleep rituals.** Develop rituals to remind your body that it is time to sleep, like relaxing stretches or breathing exercises for 15 minutes before bed.
10. **No clock-watching.** Checking the clock during the night can wake you up and reinforces negative thoughts such as "Oh no, look how late it is, I'll never get to sleep."
11. **Keep daytime routine the same.** Even if you have a bad night sleep it is important that you try to keep your daytime activities the same as you had planned. That is, don't avoid activities because you feel tired. This can reinforce the insomnia.