

Sleep Hygiene: How to Sleep Better

Version 2.0 edited November 28, 2019

Created by: Leah Coffin, Occupational Health Consultant

Do you have trouble falling asleep? Do you feel tired when you wake up? Do you have trouble falling back asleep in the middle of the night? If so, then sleep hygiene is for you! The purpose of this brochure is to provide you with facts about sleep and sleep hygiene.

Why do I need to sleep?

Sleep gives you all these benefits:

- Allows your body to repair and strengthen itself, both physically and mentally
- Helps your long-term memory
- Improves your quality of life
- Helps your immune system
- Helps control your appetite¹

How much sleep do I need?

To get all the benefits of sleep, adults need 7-9 hours of sleep per night¹. As you sleep, your body goes through two stages: rapid eye movement (REM), and non-rapid eye movement (non-REM). Both stages are important and give you the benefits of sleep¹.

What happens if I don't sleep enough?

If you don't get the 7-9 hours of sleep per night, your body cannot repair itself. This can lead to:

- Increased fatigue
- Increased pain
- Increased emotional distress and irritability
- Increased clumsiness
- Decreased performance at work or school
- Poor memory
- Increased risk of automobile accidents
- Difficulty concentrating²



Do medications affect my sleep?

Yes, many medications will have side-effects that interrupt sleep and decrease the benefits of sleep. If you have trouble sleeping and are taking any of the medications in the chart below, discuss the possible side effects with your healthcare provider.

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Medication	Possible Side Effects ¹
Cough, cold, flu medications	May contain alcohol, which decreases the benefits of sleep
Allergy medications	May decrease the benefits of sleep
High blood pressure medications	May cause insomnia, or frequent night urination
Asthma medications	May cause insomnia
Depression and anxiety medications	May cause daytime sleepiness, which decreases the benefits of sleep

How can I improve my sleep?

Sleep hygiene increases the benefits of sleep. Sleep hygiene is activities to help you feel rested, and get 7-9 hours of sleep per night². Sleep hygiene activities work the best if you perform them every day. This creates a healthy routine.

What are examples of sleep hygiene activities? ¹

1. **Go to bed & wake up at the same time every day.** Do this even on days you are not working. Do not sleep more than 9 hours per night, as it causes the same tired feelings as sleeping less than 7 hours per night.
2. **Avoid naps during the day.** Naps disturb your routine bedtime and wake-up time.
3. **Exercise can encourage good sleep.** Exercise at any time of the day, but do not interrupt your sleep for exercise.
4. **Exposure yourself to lots of daylight.** Go outside to get daylight helps you keep a routine bedtime and wake-up time.
5. **Only use your bed for sleep.** Try not to use your bed to watch TV, listen to the radio, or read (for long periods of time).
6. **Avoid screens (TV, smartphones) up to 1.5 hours before bedtime.** These stimulate you awake.
7. **Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol close to bedtime.** These stimulate you awake. Remember, coffee, chocolate, and some teas have caffeine.
8. **Avoid eating food right before sleep.** Food stimulates you awake.



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9. **Create a relaxing bedtime routine.** Start to relax for 1-hour before bedtime. Relaxing activities may include a hot bath, reading, yoga, or quiet time. Avoid emotionally upsetting conversations and activities before bedtime.



10. **Create a relaxing sleep environment.** The bed should be comfortable. The room should not be too hot or too cold. The room should be as dark as possible.

11. **If you can't fall asleep, do not stay awake in bed for too long.** Go into another room and do something relaxing until you feel tired, then return to bed. Avoid screens (TV, smartphone) during these times. If your mind is fixated on a particular task, or a to-do list, write your thoughts in a bedside journal.

12. **Avoid watching the clock.** Looking at a clock (when falling asleep, or when awake in the middle of the night) can increase stress and make it harder to fall asleep. Turn your clock away from you.

How many sleep hygiene activities do I need to do?

Start by adding a few sleep hygiene activities into your bedtime routine. Slowly add more and more sleep hygiene activities until you have tried most, or all, of them. Continue with the sleep hygiene activities that work the best for you.

How long does it take sleep hygiene activities to give me better sleep?

If performed every day, sleep hygiene activities can improve your sleep immediately. You may feel the full benefits of sleep hygiene activities in 4-6 weeks².

Other than sleep hygiene activities, what else can I do?

Follow up with your healthcare provider to discuss your sleep habits and any current medications. If sleep hygiene is not working for you, you may wish to speak with your healthcare provider about other sleep treatments, such as:

- Sleep counseling
- Cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia
- Mindfulness
- Hypnotherapy³

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Where can I find more information on sleep?

Visit the National Sleep Foundation website (www.sleepfoundation.org) for further information on sleep tips, sleep topics, and sleep disorders.

If you have questions, please speak to your Occupational Health Consultant at Work to Wellness.

Office telephone: 604-465-0094

Email: admin@worktowellness.com

Use this chart to track your sleep. Fill in the chart every day for 4 weeks. The chart will help show you how sleep hygiene activities improve your sleep. The first row shows you an example of how to track your sleep.

	Date	Sleep Time	Wake Time	Number of Times I woke up during the night	How rested I feel 0-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 0= not at all 10= completely	Total number of hours slept
	<i>Monday, May 5th</i>	<i>11:50pm</i>	<i>6:00am</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>6 hours 10 mins</i>
Week 1						
Week 2						

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Week 3						
Week 4						

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References

1. National Sleep Foundation. *Why Do We Need Sleep?* National Sleep Foundation. Available from: <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/why-do-we-need-sleep> [Accessed 9th May 2019].
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