

## Sleep Hygiene

### What is sleep hygiene?

Sleep hygiene is a variety of different practices that are necessary to have normal, quality night-time sleep and full daytime alertness.

### What are some examples of good sleep hygiene?

The most important sleep hygiene measure is to maintain a regular sleep and wake pattern seven days a week. It is also important to spend an appropriate amount of time in bed, not too little, or too excessive. This may vary by individual; for example, if someone has a problem with daytime sleepiness, it might be helpful to spend a minimum of eight hours in bed, if they have difficulty sleeping at night, they might try limiting themselves to 7 hours in bed in order to keep the sleep pattern consolidated. In addition, good sleep hygiene practices include:

- Avoid napping during the day; it can disturb the normal pattern of sleep and wakefulness.
- Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol after lunchtime. While alcohol is well known to speed the onset of sleep, it disrupts sleep in the second half as the body begins to metabolize the alcohol, causing arousal.
- Exercise can promote good sleep. Vigorous exercise should be taken in the morning or late afternoon. A relaxing exercise, like yoga, can be done before bed to help initiate a restful night's sleep.
- Food can be disruptive right before sleep; stay away from large meals close to bedtime. Also dietary changes can cause sleep problems, if someone is struggling with a sleep problem, it's not a good time to start experimenting with spicy dishes. And, remember, chocolate usually contains caffeine!
- Ensure adequate exposure to natural light during daytime. This is particularly important for older people who may not venture outside as frequently as children and adults. Light exposure helps maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle.
- Establish a regular relaxing bedtime routine. Avoid emotionally upsetting conversations and activities before going to sleep. It's not restful to dwell on, or bring your problems to bed, so learning a technique like self-hypnosis can help reduce that mental activity.
- Associate your bed with sleep. It's not a good idea to use your bed to watch TV, or to use a tablet or smartphone as these are stimulating to the brain. Listening to the radio, or reading can be beneficial, providing the material is not too intense.
- Make sure that the sleep environment is pleasant and relaxing. The bed should be comfortable, the room should not be too hot or cold, or too bright.
- Learn a gentle muscle-relaxation technique. Used with a lulling, meditative approach this can be very helpful.