

SLEEP HYGIENE

Aids to Sleep

- Consistency in time of going to bed and time of rising.
- Bedtime at 10 or 11 PM at the latest. For most, going to bed after midnight may create “second wind syndrome.”
- Warm bath (not showers) may help with sleep. If you like, add lavender oil or another essential oil conducive to sleep.
- Floor or low level light in the evening will help your biological clock be tuned up for sleep.
- Tranquil music before bedtime and/or while falling asleep. Sound machines with waterfalls, rain, etc., may also be helpful.
- Keep the bedroom cool at night.
- Keep the bedroom dark, unless you need the reassurance of a nightlight. If you wake up too early because of light, consider wearing an eye mask.
- Keep the bedroom as quiet as possible. A white noise or other sound machine may help block out noise. Use earplugs if necessary.
- Invest in a good mattress.
- Make sure your pillow works for your head, neck and shoulders. Consult a professional if necessary.
- Prior to bedtime, practice the Relaxation Response, use the Stresseraser, or listen to a relaxation CD.
- Set the alarm and then turn the clock around so that you can't see the time.

Avoid

- No computer work for an hour before bedtime.
- No stimulating television for an hour before bedtime.
- Stop drinking fluids 90 minutes before bed if you tend to wake up to go to the bathroom.
- Avoid bright or overhead light in the evenings.
- No heavy meals close to bedtime.
- Caffeine from mid-afternoon on – or longer. Some retain caffeine as much as 20 hours.
- Late afternoon naps may be problematic.
- Do not use alcohol as an aid to sleep. Although it may help some to fall asleep, the subsequent withdrawal reduces the quality of sleep and may cause wakeups, nightmares and sweating.
- Do not expose yourself to bright light if you need to get up during the night. Instead, install a nightlight, preferably green.
- Don't lie in bed worrying. If you have this tendency, get a notebook and set aside a time for writing down your worries. Defer worrying until the scheduled time.

General Health

- Rule out possible causes of sleep disturbance—apnea or other sleep disorder.
- Review your life for sources of stress. Middle of the night wakeup and worry is likely to be related to unreleased daytime anxiety.
- Rule out medication side effects.
- Take up meditation, yoga or other study that teaches relaxation.

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