

Sleep Hygiene

The most common cause of insomnia is a *change in your daily routine*.

Travel, a change in work hours, disruption of other behaviors (eating, exercise, leisure, etc.), and relationship conflicts all have the potential to affect your quality of sleep.

Paying attention to good sleep hygiene is the most important thing you can do to keep getting a good night's sleep. Try to implement some of these do's and don't's into your sleep practices.

Do's

- Go to bed at the same time each day.
- Get up from bed at the same time each day. Try to maintain a similar wake-up time on weekends, too.
- Get regular exercise each day, preferably in the morning. There is good evidence showing that regular exercise corresponds to restful sleep. Regular exercise includes stretching and aerobic exercise.
- Get regular exposure to sunlight or bright lights, especially in late afternoon.
- Keep the temperature in your bedroom comfortable.
- Keep the bedroom quiet when sleeping.
- Keep the bedroom dark enough to facilitate sleep.
- Use your bed only for sleep and sexual activity. This will help you associate your bed with sleep instead of other activities like looking at your phone or the television.
- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine. Relaxing rituals prior to bedtime might include a warm bath or shower, aromatherapy, reading, or listening to soothing music.
- Use a relaxation technique like meditation or relaxing imagery just before going to sleep. Even if you don't fall asleep immediately, your body will begin to rest and relax.
- Keep your feet and hands warm. Try wearing warm socks to bed.
- Designate another time to write down problems and potential solutions instead of thinking about these things in bed. If your mind is active, try thinking about positive things that have happened or things you are grateful for, or practice a relaxation or mindfulness technique.

Don'ts

- ❖ Don't exercise right before going to bed.
- ❖ Don't engage in stimulating activity right before bed (like playing a game, watching an exciting show/movie, or having an important or high-stakes conversation).
- ❖ Don't have caffeine products in the evening (coffee, caffeinated tea, soda, chocolate, etc.).
- ❖ Don't read or watch television in bed. (If you read before bed to relax, try to read in a different location than in bed.)
- ❖ Don't use alcohol to help you sleep. It actually interrupts your sleep cycle!
- ❖ Don't go to bed very hungry or very full.
- ❖ Don't take over-the-counter sleeping pills without your physician's knowledge. Tolerance can develop rapidly with these medications.
- ❖ Don't take daytime naps. If you do, make them no longer than 20 minutes.
- ❖ Don't lie in bed awake for more than 20–30 minutes. Instead, get up, go to a different room or different part of the bedroom, engage in a quiet activity like reading, and then return to bed when you feel sleepy. Do not turn on bright lights or sit in front of a television or computer/phone/tablet screen; this will only stimulate your brain to wake up more.
- ❖ Don't command yourself to go to sleep; you'll only become more alert.
- ❖ Don't watch the clock or count minutes; this can create anxiety that keeps you awake.
- ❖ Don't dwell on negative thoughts like, "It's really late! I won't get a good night's sleep." Avoid catastrophizing. Tension and anxiety will make it harder to get to sleep.
- ❖ Don't change your daytime routine the next day if you have trouble getting to sleep. It's important to try to maintain your regular schedule of activity. Changing up your routine can reinforce your sleeping difficulty.
- ❖ Don't increase caffeine intake the next day because you feel more tired after getting poor sleep. This can reinforce a cycle of sleeping difficulty.