

Sleep Hygiene Hints

Duration: 10-15 minutes

Frequency: As Needed

Level of Difficulty: Easy

Instructions: Here are some of the components related to good sleep hygiene. Put a checkmark next the ones you already do, and put an X next to the ones you need to work on integrating into your nighttime routine. See if you can challenge yourself over the next week to maintain your healthy habits and incorporate one or two new ideas each night.

- ___ Avoid caffeinated foods and beverages (chocolate counts!) up to four to six hours prior to sleep. If you are sensitive to excess sugars, also refrain from eating sugar several hours prior to sleep.
- ___ Avoid any and all alcoholic beverages before nighttime. While many enjoy a nightcap or glass of wine to unwind, alcohol can negatively impact overall sleep quality.
- ___ Reserve your bed for sleep-related activities only. Do not do paperwork, check emails, or even read for extensive periods of time in your bed.
- ___ Turn off all electronic devices or anything with a screen two hours prior to bed.
- ___ Consider activating any features on your phone that keep it from emitting blue light at night. On some phones this is called the "night shift" feature, and it allows you to set a time when the phone goes into this mode. This can also serve as a reminder of when you need to put away electronic devices.
- ___ Find a comfortable temperature for sleep so you are not too hot or cold to fall asleep. The ideal temperature for many is between 65 and 72 degrees.
- ___ Start preparing your body for sleep by slowly dimming the lights around you one to two hours prior to sleep. This helps signal to the body to start winding down for the evening.
- ___ Consider taking a warm bath or shower to relax the muscles and wash away the day one hour prior to sleep.

- _____ If reading before bed is relaxing to you, consider reading for 10-15 minutes while in bed. If the material is too activating, it can wake up the mind. You don't want to spend too much time in bed doing non sleep-related activities, though, so be sure to keep an eye on the clock.

- _____ Consider a meditation, short prayer, or gentle stretches before bed. While you ideally don't want to sleep with a phone in your bedroom, there are some excellent meditation apps available that utilize yoga nidra (a type of sleep-related meditation) that can relax you prior to sleep.

- _____ Do not go to bed hungry or overly full. Both scenarios can negatively impact sleep. There is some research indicating that the calcium and magnesium in dairy milk or yogurt can assist with sleep. However, if you abstain from dairy, consider a light snack if you're hungry, and do not eat a large meal immediately prior to sleep.

- _____ Consider relaxing herbal teas prior to bed. Many stores sell chamomile or lavender teas that can help to relax you. Be sure to check with a doctor if you find a sleep concoction tea in order to make sure it is safe to ingest.

- _____ Avoid relying on over-the-counter medications or melatonin for sleep. Even though you do not need a prescription for these medications, this does not make them completely safe. Some can be habit-forming or addictive, so saving these medications for use on an "emergency basis" is a much safer bet.

- _____ Try to have as much of a regular routine as possible so your body slowly becomes attuned to when it is time for sleep.