Sleep Hygiene & Good Sleep Habits

Sleep hygiene refers to the habits, environmental factors, and practices that may influence the length and quality of one's sleep. These include bedtime, nighttime rituals, and disruptions to one's sleep.

How much sleep do I need? 7-8 hours per night

What happens when I don’t get enough sleep?

* Impaired mood, memory, and concentration.
* Dampened immune system.
* Increased risk of accidents.
* Stressed relationships.

Stages of Sleep: 1: transitional stage (muscle jerks); 2: light sleep 3: Delta sleep (deeper sleep; when awakened, often feel disoriented) 4. REM

Repeated about every 90 minutes, or 5 to 6 times per night

Circadian Rhythms:

Greatly influenced when we sleep and the quantity and the quality of our sleep. The more stable and consistent our circadian rhythm is, the better our sleep. This cycle may be altered by the timing of various factors, including naps, bedtime, exercise, and especially exposure to light (from traveling across time zones to staring at that laptop in bed at night).

Aging:

After the age of 40, our sleep patterns change, and we have many more nocturnal awakenings than in our younger years. These awakenings not only directly affect the quality of our sleep, but they also interact with any other condition that may cause arousals or awakenings, like the withdrawal syndrome that occurs after drinking alcohol close to bedtime. The more awakenings we have at night, the more likely we will awaken feeling unrefreshed and unrestored.

Psychological Stressors:

* Psychological stressors like deadlines, exams, relationship conflict, trauma and job crises may prevent us from falling asleep or wake us from sleep throughout the night. It takes time to "turn off" all the noise from the day. If you work right up to the time you turn out the lights, or are reviewing all the day's events and planning tomorrow (sound familiar?), or worrying about the future, you simply cannot just "flip a switch" and drop off to a blissful night's sleep.

How to deal with stressors:

* Develop some kind of pre-sleep ritual to break the connection between all the stress and bedtime. This is perhaps even more important for children. These rituals can be as short as 10 minutes or as long as an hour. Some find relief in making a list of all the stressors of the day, along with a plan to deal with them, as it serves to end the day.
* Combining this with a period of relaxation, perhaps by reading something light, meditating, or taking a hot bath can also help you get better sleep. And don't look at that clock!

Social or Recreational Drugs:

* Social or recreational drugs like caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol may have a larger impact on your sleep than you realize.
* Caffeine, which can stay in your system as long as 14 hours, increases the number of times you awaken at night and decreases the total amount of sleep time.

**Tips:**

* **Don’t go to bed unless you are sleepy**
  + If you are not sleepy at bedtime, then do something else. Read a book, listen to soft music or browse through a magazine. Find something relaxing, but not stimulating, to take your mind off of worries about sleep. This will relax your body and distract your mind.

Things I have heard people do:

* Reading a light, entertaining book or magazine
* Listening to soft music
* Making simple preparations for the next day
* A light bedtime snack, a cup of hot tea, or a glass of warm milk
* Hobbies such as knitting or jigsaw puzzles
* Listening to books on tape
* **Get up at the same time every morning.** 
  + Do this even on weekends and holidays.
* Get a full night’s sleep on a regular basis.
  + Get enough sleep so that you feel well-rested nearly every day.
* **Avoid taking naps if you can.** 
  + If you must take a nap, try to keep it short (less than one hour). Never take a nap after 3 p.m.
* **Keep a regular schedule.** 
  + Regular times for meals, medications, chores, and other activities help keep the inner body clock running smoothly.
* **Don’t read, write, eat, watch TV, talk on the phone, or play cards in bed.**
* **Do not have any caffeine after lunch.**
* **Do not have a beer, a glass of wine, or any other alcohol within six hours of your bedtime.**
* **Do not have a cigarette or any other source of nicotine before bedtime.**
* **Do not go to bed hungry, but don’t eat a big meal near bedtime either.**
* **Avoid any tough exercise within six hours of your bedtime.** 
  + You should exercise on a regular basis, but do it earlier in the day. (Talk to your doctor before you begin an exercise program.)
* Use sleeping pills cautiously
* **Try to get rid of or deal with things that make you worry.** 
  + If you are unable to do this, then find a time during the day to get all of your worries out of your system. Your bed is a place to rest, not a place to worry.
* **Make your bedroom quiet, dark, and a little bit cool.** 
  + An easy way to remember this: it should remind you of a cave. While this may not sound romantic, it seems to work for bats. Bats are champion sleepers. They get about 16 hours of sleep each day. Maybe it’s because they sleep in dark, cool caves.
* Many people fall asleep with the television on in their room. Watching television before bedtime is often a bad idea. Television is a very engaging medium that tends to keep people up. We generally recommend that the television not be in the bedroom.
* **Late night news or prime time shows frequently have disturbing, violent material**. Even non-violent programming can have commercials which are jarring and louder than the actual program.
* **Light and noise.** The continuous flickering light coming from the TV (or a computer screen) can interfere with the body’s clock, which is sensitive to any light.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy…is it right for you?

Stimulus Control

A stimulus is anything that causes a response. The goal of this method is for you to have a positive response when you get into bed at night.

This method teaches you to use the bed only for sleep and for sex. You are not to read, watch TV, or do anything else in bed. You are also taught to go to

Sleep Restriction

* + This method sets strict limits on the time you spend in bed each night. The initial limit used is the same as the amount of sleep you tend to get on a nightly basis.
  + This sleep loss will make you even more tired at first. But it will also help you fall asleep faster and wake up fewer times in the night. This gives you a solid period of sleep and a more stable sleep pattern. As your sleep improves, the limit on your time in bed is slowly increased.
* Cognitive Control and Psychotherapy
  + These methods are used to help you identify attitudes and beliefs that hinder your sleep. These negative thoughts involve worries and stress that keep you awake. A therapist helps you process your thoughts and feelings about sleep.
  + Another method is to use guided imagery. You imagine that you are in a story. In your mind you try to picture what things look, feel, and sound like. You try to make it as real as possible.
* Side Effects
  + Cognitive behavioral therapy is not a quick fix for a sleep problem. It requires steady practice over time. Frustration may arise if you expect dramatic results right away. The time, effort, and money required may turn some people away.
  + *Sleep Restriction Therapy* will make you sleepier at first. This is due to mild sleep loss in the early stages of the therapy.