

## HELP FOR GOOD SLEEP HYGIENE

- Establish and maintain a daily schedule of activities every day of the week. Try to eat at regular times. Keep the same bedtime hours even through the weekend.
- Keep a regular wake-up time each morning, no matter what time you went to bed the night before. You should maintain this wakeup time regardless of how poor your previous night's sleep was. This is the strongest signal you can give your internal clock to set the circadian rhythm. Eventually the body adjusts to this schedule, which leads to a regular time of sleep onset.
- Do not stay in bed extra time in the morning. Staying in bed for excessively long times can lead to fragmented and shallow sleep. Trying to make up for lost sleep causes the circadian rhythm to be delayed by several hours and you will not be able to sleep at your desired time the next night. You may be starting a vicious circle of poor sleep. Reducing the time spent in bed can be beneficial because you are more likely to become sleepy at the desired time the next night.
- Limit naps during the day, particularly if you are a poor sleeper. Naps usually reduce the amount of sleep you need at night, causing difficulties falling asleep or light sleep.
- Maintain a regular daily program of exercise at an appropriate time. If you are a particularly poor sleeper try to take this exercise in the late afternoon or early evening. However, do not exercise vigorously right before going to bed -your system may become too stimulated to relax and you will have difficulty going to sleep.
- Approach bedtime as relaxed as possible. Plan to spend your evening winding down from the activities of the day by doing something enjoyable and relaxing. Too many people review the day's problems and tomorrow's plans. This stimulates your mind and prevents sleep. At the bedtime hour, chances are that you cannot take any action to resolve work or other problems, so you are only creating anxiety by thinking about them. Discipline yourself not to think upsetting thoughts in bed –be prepared to consciously replace them with pleasant and relaxing thoughts.
- Establish a routine transition period to prepare you/or bedtime and do it-dally, even when traveling. Set aside some time for gradual unwinding from the stressful events of the day. One sleep clinic advises that you make a list of things to do for the next day so that you don't stay awake thinking of unfinished business. Also helpful are establishing regular bedtime teeth. Once in bed, establish a routine for relaxation-closing your eyes, getting comfortable in bed, and thinking of calm mental images.
- If you cannot fall asleep easily, get out of bed and do something different. Remember that it should not be an activity that is strenuous or stimulating. Try to select an activity such as reading which will prepare you for relaxation and sleep.
- Make your bedroom conducive to sleep. Use a mattress that is comfortable for you and control light and sound if they disturb your sleep. Avoid either excessively warm or

excessively cold rooms as they can cause sleep interruptions. The ideal temperature for sleep is thought to be between 64 and 66 degrees Fahrenheit.

- Avoid using the bedroom for other activities unrelated to sleep. You want to associate this particular room with relaxation so you must break the conditioned association of sleeplessness with the bedroom environment. Watching television, reading, knitting, exercising, and similar activities done in the bedroom can trigger "wake" rather than "sleep" signals.

***The important thing about sleep hygiene is that you take positive steps to improve your sleep habits***

- Avoid eating heavy meals prior to bedtime as well as going to bed hungry. Hunger often disturbs sleep so a light snack or glass of milk will make you feel more comfortable. The amino acid in milk (tryptophan) is thought to help induce sleep and carbohydrates are thought to move it to the brain faster, so a glass of warm milk and crackers may be a ritual, which will prepare you for sleep.
- Avoid taking any stimulants before bedtime. This includes coffee, tea, alcohol, Nicotine, diet drinks containing caffeine, and food with caffeine derivatives (such as chocolate). People with insomnia often are sensitive even to small doses of stimulants such as caffeine. As for smoking nicotine stimulates the central nervous system and heavy smokers have been found to sleep more poorly than non-smokers. If used in moderation, alcohol can be a relaxant. But when alcohol is taken prior to bedtime, sleep can be highly disturbed with many awakenings and total sleep is decreased.
- Avoid taking sleeping medications. Sleeping pills are not a long-term solution to poor sleep and their use can aggravate sleeping problems.

**The important point about sleep hygiene is that you can take positive steps to improve sleeping habits. Don't "give up" on these rules after only a few nights. The body needs time for the type of conditioning incorporated in these guidelines. And your daytime worries are affecting your nighttime sleep; you'll need time to learn the mental habits necessary for relaxation. Remember, hygiene means *practicing* that which is conducive to your health and good sleep habits are worth the practice.**