

SLEEP HYGIENE

Checklist



Sleep hygiene is about having good sleep habits. Everyone's sleep is different. Below, you can choose some or all of the strategies that will help you to have a good nights sleep every night.

Stop pre-sleep electronic use

At least 30 minutes before bed switch off electronics. Electronics are cognitively engaging and can induce emotions, e.g., stress/excitement, preventing you from winding down. The bright light from electronics also disrupts a normal sleep-wake schedule by conflicting with nature's daily light-dark cycle. Don't answer emails, look at social media or watch TV.

Remove naps

While napping can help after sleep deprivation, regular naps may deter night time sleep. Sleeping continuously at night is best, so skip the naps and sleep longer that night. If you really feel the need to nap, do it before 3pm and keep it under 60 minutes.

Exercise at the right time

Exercise can facilitate or inhibit sleep. Do exercise during the day, don't exercise too late in the day and avoid exercise 2 hours prior to bed as this can increase physiological arousal and delay sleep.

Avoid caffeine and alcohol

At least 4-6 hours before bed remove stimulants e.g., coffee, alcohol, energy drinks, medication, as these can activate neurobiological systems that maintain wakefulness. Alcohol requires metabolism and this physiological arousal can disturb our sleep, notwithstanding that it seems to initially induce sleepiness.

Use the bed for the 3 S's

Sleep, sex and sickness. Spending less time in bed can promote more continuous and deeper sleep because your body begins to associate the bed with rest. Don't eat, work or watch TV in bed.

Keep fixed bedtime and wake up times

Waking up at the same time every morning promotes a regular sleep schedule, teaching your body to know when it is time to fall asleep. Even if this means waking up earlier on the weekends or getting less sleep one night, your sleep will be better in the long term.

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Do relaxing activities pre-sleep

Doing something relaxing can promote sleepiness by reducing physiological arousal and minimising thinking. Stretching, listening to calm music, engaging in breath work or meditation or even having a hot shower can all help promote sleepiness.

Make a worry list

Falling asleep is harder if you are worrying or thinking about emotional things. Set aside a few minutes before bed and say out loud that you will leave those thoughts for tonight and "worry" about them in the morning. List/write everything that you want to remember for tomorrow, including the actual worries.

Do boring activities pre-sleep

Boring activities slow down our cognitive processes, slowing our mind and allowing for sleepiness. Some ideas: listen to a radio show or podcast in a foreign language, read an uninteresting document or book.

Improve your sleeping environment

Noises, light and uncomfortable temperatures have been shown to disrupt continuous sleep. Invest in a good pillow and mattress, remove distractions, using soothing sounds (e.g. soundscapes) and ensure the room is dark. Wear socks.

Get up and try again

If you can't sleep after 20+ minutes of trying, then get up and do something relaxing or boring. Actively trying to fall asleep is frustrating and will prevent sleep. Try reading something really boring, once you are sleepy, go back to bed and try again

Make an appointment with a professional

If you think your sleep difficulties might extend beyond habit change, speak with your GP for a referral to a sleep specialist. This will be invaluable to your health and long-term health outcomes