

Please Read Me!

Sleep Hygiene Guidelines

If you are here chances are that you may have a sleep problem. Sleep problems often have two parts: first, the medical or anatomical portion of your sleep problem and second, problems regarding your sleep environment and sleep habits. These guidelines are called “Sleep Hygiene” and are very important to improve your sleep.

The Sleep Disorder Center recommends good sleep hygiene practices and wants to teach you how to achieve better sleep.

- 1)** It is best to avoid reading, watching TV, eating, listening to the radio, etc. in bed. The bed is to be used for sleep and sex only . If not, we associate the bed with other activates and often it becomes difficult to fall asleep.
- 2)** Minimize noise, light, and temperature extremes during the sleep period with ear plugs, window blinds, or electric blanket or air conditioner. Both noise and light have been shown to disrupt falling asleep. Interestingly, if your room is too hot (above 75 degrees) or too cold (below 54 degrees) it can affect your sleep as well.
- 3)** Try not to drink fluids after 8:00pm. This may reduce awakenings due to urination.
- 4)** Nicotine is a stimulant and should be avoided near bedtime and upon night awakenings. Thus, having a smoke before bed, although it feels relaxing, is actually putting a stimulant into your blood stream. **WE ARE NOT RECOMMENDING SMOKING. IF YOU MUST, FOLLOW THESE SUGGESTIONS:** cut back before bed, during the 4 hours before bed have fewer cigarettes, and none 30-45 minutes before bed.
- 5)** Caffeine is also a stimulant and should be discontinued 4-6 hours before bedtime. Caffeine is in coffee (100-200mg), soda (50-75 mg), iced tea, chocolate, and various over the counter medications. Caffeine stays in your systems for up to 12 hours!!! Thus try not to have any past lunch time, and decaffeinated coffee after dinner. **BE CAREFUL** if you consume large amount of caffeine and you cut yourself off too quickly . **YOU WILL GET HEADACHES** which, of course, will keep you awake.
- 6)** Alcohol is a depressant; although it may help you fall asleep, it causes awakenings later in the night. As alcohol is digested your body goes into withdrawal from the alcohol causing nighttime awakenings, and often nightmares. Excessive alcohol use can lead to dependence and the withdrawal from alcohol dependence leads to poor sleep.
- 7)** A light snack may be sleep inducing, but a heavy meal too close to bedtime interferes with sleep. Stay away from protein and stick to carbohydrates, or dairy products. Milk contains the amino acid L-Tryptophan which has been shown in research to help people go to sleep. So milk and cookie or crackers (without chocolate) may be useful and taste good as well.
- 8)** Do not exercise vigorously just before bed. If you are the type of person who is aroused by exercise, it may be best to exercise late in the afternoon (preferably an aerobic workout, like running, or walking). Some studies have shown that exercise right before bed is not as bad as once thought, unless you are the type of person that becomes more alert with exercise.