

Some Basic Sleep Hygiene Tips

- A) *Establish a Regular Bedtime.* Your body works on a regular cycle called a circadian rhythm. The time you go to bed may be very important for how quickly you are able to fall asleep. For the next seven nights, go to bed as close to the same time as possible – and this means weekends, too. The other side of this coin – you have to get up at the same time, as well. Even if you went to bed at your normal time and didn't fall asleep for some time, you should still get up at your normal time. This is very difficult to do at first, but is vital.
- B) *Reserve Evening Hours for Relaxation and Leisure.* Many people think that strenuous activity (physical or mental) prior to going to bed will help them sleep. It seems to make sense – you're just "trying to tire yourself out." However, it often has just the opposite effect than desired. Rest, relax, meditate – but don't work.
- C) *Avoid Naps.* This is very difficult, especially if you are very tired during the day. But napping during the day may reduce the need for sleep at night, and thus perpetuates a vicious circle. Although naps may feel good, they are probably not your friend in the long run. If you simply have to nap, make sure it is for less than an hour, and before 3 PM.
- D) *Avoid Caffeine, Alcohol, Nicotine.* You're tired in the evening and you've found that a cup of coffee or a cigarette helps to perk you up. Unfortunately, they are actually having a lot of effects on you. Alcohol is a problem as well – it may help you doze off later in the evening, but it makes sleep more fragile during the rest of the night. Avoid all three of these for four to six hours before bed time. Heavy meals in the evening are also best avoided.
- E) *Create Favourable Conditions for Sleep.* Good sleep can be aided by a quiet, dark room that is not overheated and has good air circulation. The bed ought to be big enough to allow stretching and movement. A firm mattress may be preferable to a soft one. If you live in a noisy neighbourhood, you may want to try running a fan or air purifier in your room to provide a constant noise which will drown out sirens or car horns.
- F) *Reserve the Bed for Sleep and Sex.* Many people do other activities in bed, such as read or watch television. Some even try to do some work while in or on the bed. These activities are all in some way stimulating. Only get into bed when you are ready to turnoff the lights and sleep.
- G) *If You Can't Sleep, Get Up.* Don't lie in bed fretting. After ten or fifteen minutes, if you're not asleep, get up and go into another room and read or watch mild television until you feel sleepy, at which point return to bed and try again. This is extremely difficult to do, but is very important.