



IMPROVING SLEEP THROUGH BEHAVIORAL CHANGE



- **Go to bed only when you are sleepy.**
The longer you are in bed, the more the bed is associated with a place to be awake instead of asleep. Delay bedtime until sleepy.
- **Get Out of Bed When You Can't Fall Asleep or Go Back to Sleep in About 15 Minutes.** Get out of bed if you don't fall asleep fairly soon. Return to bed only when you are sleepy. When you feel sleepy, return to bed. The goal is to reconnect your bed with being asleep.
- **Use the Bed for Sleep and Sex Only.**
Do not watch TV, listen to the radio, eat, or read in your bed or bedroom.

SLEEP HYGIENE GUIDELINES

Caffeine

Avoid caffeine 6 to 8 hours before bedtime. Caffeine disturbs sleep. Thus, drinking caffeinated beverages should be avoided near bedtime.

Nicotine

Avoid nicotine before bedtime. Nicotine can keep you awake. Avoid tobacco near bedtime and during the night.

Alcohol

Avoid alcohol after dinner. Alcohol often promotes the onset of sleep, but interrupts your natural sleep pattern. Do not consume it any closer than 4 hours before going to bed.

Sleeping Pills

Sleep medications are effective only temporarily. Sleep medications lose their effectiveness in about 2 to 4 weeks when taken regularly. Over time, sleeping pills actually can make sleep problems worse; withdrawal from the medication can lead to an insomnia rebound. Keep use of sleeping pills infrequent, but don't worry if you need to use one on an occasional basis.

Regular Exercise

Do not exercise within 2 hours of bedtime as it may elevate nervous system activity and interfere with your ability to fall asleep

Bedroom Environment

Your bedroom should have a moderate temperature and be quiet and dark. Noises can be masked with background white noise (e.g., the noise of a fan) or with earplugs. Bedrooms may be darkened with blackout shades, or sleep masks can be worn.

Eating

A light bedtime snack, such a glass of warm milk, cheese, or a bowl of cereal can promote sleep. Avoid snacks in the middle of the night because awakening may become associated with hunger.

Avoid Naps

The sleep you obtain during the day takes away from the amount of sleep you need that night. If you must nap, schedule it before 3:00 p.m. Don't sleep more than 15 to 30 minutes.

Allow Yourself at Least an Hour Before Bedtime to Unwind

Find what works for you to wind down, and perhaps give yourself an hour to do so.

Regular Sleep Schedule

Keep a regular time each day, 7 days a week, to get out of bed. Keeping a regular waking time helps set your circadian rhythm so that your body learns to sleep at the desired time.

Set a Reasonable Bedtime and Arising Time and Stick to Them

Set the alarm clock and get out of bed at the same time each morning, weekdays and weekends, regardless of your bedtime or the amount of sleep you obtained on the previous night. This guideline is designed to regulate your internal biological clock and reset your sleep–wake rhythm.