

SLEEP HYGIENE

Habits and Practices that are Conducive to Sleeping Well on a Regular Basis

Getting the right amount of sleep has many health benefits. It can reduce your risk of cancer, heart disease, and even depression. Getting proper sleep can boost your immune system and help with weight management. Equally important are the brain benefits to getting enough sleep. Getting proper sleep helps to make us more alert, improves our memory recall, and helps us concentrate better. These sound like some great things to have for finals! However, sometimes it can be difficult to make time for sleep in a busy schedule, and sometimes it's hard to fall asleep. Here are some tips for making sleep a priority and getting better sleep!



- **CONSISTENCY.** Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day. This helps train your brain and body to create a consistent sleep pattern.

- **ROUTINE.** Create a relaxing bedtime routine. This helps your brain understand when it's time to go to sleep. Suggested activities include reading, journaling, stretching, warm shower or bath, and drinking sleepy tea.

- **PROTECT THE BED.** Use your bed only for sleep and sex. Don't do homework, watch TV, or do other activities in bed. This will help train your body and brain that being in bed means sleeping (or sex).

- **NAP CONTROL.** Taking naps is fine, but limit them to 20-30 minutes. Excessive napping can make you feel more drowsy, and can interfere with nighttime sleeping.

- **SET THE SCENE.** Sleep experts suggest sleeping in a dark, quiet, cool place. Consider investing in a sleep mask and some ear plugs!

- **TURN OFF THE TECH.** Bright light from phones, TVs, and computers interferes with the release of melatonin, a chemical that signals the brain that it's time to sleep. Stop using technology at least one half hour before bed. It might be tough, but don't use your phone in bed! It will wake your brain up when you are trying to get it to go to sleep.

- **DRINK SMART.** Try to limit the amount of caffeine you consume during the day, and stop drinking caffeine at least six hours before bedtime. Alcohol can also affect your sleep, and experts recommend cutting it off at the same time you cut out caffeine. Nicotine is also a stimulant and should be avoided at night.

- **EAT SMART.** Avoid heavy foods too close to bedtime.

- **EXERCISE.** Getting enough exercise each day contributes to better sleep. Exercising too close to bedtime can interfere with falling asleep though, so don't engage in heavy exercise within two hours of bedtime.

- **TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF.** Experts recommend not having clocks that you can see from your bed. Getting stressed out that you're not asleep yet actually makes it harder to fall asleep. Worrying too much about anything interferes with the brain's ability to calm down and fall asleep, so consider keeping a worry list near your bed. When you find yourself worrying, get up and write down everything you are worried about. Leave it for the morning and go back to bed!

- **GET UP.** If you can't fall asleep, get out of bed and do a calming activity, like reading, coloring, or journaling until you feel sleepy. Experts recommend not lying in bed for more than thirty minutes without falling asleep. Lying there getting stressed about not falling asleep can have a stimulating effect, waking you up when you're trying to settle down to sleep!

SLEEP DIARY

Track your sleep for a week. Notice any patterns and how different actions throughout your day influence your sleep.

Morning Questions:	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Time you fell asleep:							
Time you woke up:							
Number of times you woke up during the night:							
Evening Questions:							
Number of caffeine drinks today:							
Time of last caffeine drink:							
Minutes exercised today:							
Minutes spent napping today:							

SLEEP DISORDERS

- Do you snore loudly when you sleep?
- Do you snore loudly and stop breathing during your sleep?
- Do you have violent movements during your sleep? Have you injured yourself or others, or acted out dreams?
- Is it hard to stay awake in boring situations?
- Do you fall asleep or get drowsy while driving?
- Do you get sleepy during certain times of the day, but have trouble falling asleep or awakening too early?
- Do you get so sleepy in the 'daytime' that you just have to lie down for a nap or rest?
- Do you ever get muscle weakness when you are emotional?
- When you lie down at night, do you ever get an unpleasant (creepy, crawly) feeling in your legs that makes you want to rub your legs or move them?
- Is your sleep disrupted by frequent awakenings?
- Are you worried about your sleep?

What to do if you think you have a sleep problem:

1. Question your bed partner or roommate about whether you snore or move excessively at night.
2. Use the Sleep Diary to record your sleep habits and your sleep/wake schedule for at least two weeks.
3. Get at least eight hours in bed every night during this two week period. Practice good sleep hygiene.
4. Then, schedule an appointment with your health care provider.

