



Sleep Hygiene: The Healthy Habits of Good Sleep

Good 'hygiene' is anything that helps you to have a healthy life. The idea behind sleep hygiene is the same as dental hygiene. Dental hygiene helps you stay healthy by keeping your teeth and gums clean and strong. Sleep hygiene helps you stay healthy by keeping your mind and body rested and strong. Following these tips will help you sleep better and feel your best. It's easier to fall asleep at night if you have bedtime 'rituals'. These are things that you do every night before going to bed.

Here are some tips for how you can improve your sleep hygiene:

1. Don't go to bed unless you are sleepy. If you are not sleepy at bedtime, then do something else. Read a book, browse through a magazine. Find something relaxing, but not stimulating to do. This will relax your body and distract your mind. Don't watch television or work on your computer. The light tricks the brain into thinking it is daytime, and you will find it more difficult to fall asleep.
2. If you are not asleep after 20 minutes, then get out of bed. Find something else to do that will make you feel relaxed. If you can, do this in another room as the bedroom should be where you go to sleep.
3. Begin rituals that help you relax each night before bed. This can include things such as warm bath, light snack or a few minutes of light stretching.
4. Get up at the same time every morning. Do this even on weekends and holidays.
5. Get a full night's sleep on a regular basis. Get enough sleep so that you feel well-rested nearly every day. Everyone requires a different amount of sleep per night to feel adequately rested.
6. Avoid taking naps if you can. If you must take a nap, keep it under one hour and well before your regular bed time.
7. Keep a regular schedule. Regular times for meals, medications, chores and other activities help keep things running smoothly.
8. Don't read, write, watch TV, talk on the phone or play cards in bed!
9. Do not have caffeine after lunch.
10. Do not have a beer, a glass of wine, or any alcohol within six hours of bed.
11. Do not have any source of nicotine before bedtime.
12. Do not go to bed hungry, but don't eat a big meal near bedtime either.
13. Avoid any tough exercise within six hours of your bedtime. You should exercise on a regular basis, but do it either earlier in the day and with your physician's okay.
14. Avoid sleeping pills, or use them cautiously. Most doctors do not prescribe sleeping pills for a period of more than three weeks.
15. Make your bedroom dark, quiet and a bit cool.
16. Do not take a hot bath or hot shower within 2 hours of bedtime.