

Sleep Hygiene Checklist

Sleep hygiene means having good sleep habits. Everyone's sleep is different. Review the strategies here and pick those that seem like the best solutions for you.



Stop pre-sleep electronic use. (30 minutes before bed) Electronics are cognitively engaging and can unexpectedly induce emotions (e.g., stress from an email, excitement from a story), preventing you from winding down. The bright light from electronics also disrupts a normal sleep-wake schedule by conflicting with nature's daily light-dark cycle. Don't answer emails, peruse social media, or watch TV/movies.



Use bed only for S. Sleep, sex, and sickness. Spending less time in bed can promote more continuous and deeper sleep, because your body begins to associate the bed with rest. Don't eat, work or watch TV in bed.



Remove naps. While naps can help after sleep deprivation, regular naps may deter nighttime sleep. Sleeping continuously at night is best, so skip the nap and sleep longer that night. If you really feel the need to nap, do it before 3pm and keep it under an hour.



Keep fixed bedtime and wake-up time. Awakening around the same time every morning promotes a regular sleep schedule. In turn, your body learns when it is time to fall asleep. Even if it means waking up earlier on weekends or getting less sleep one night, your sleep will be better in the long term.



Avoid caffeine and alcohol. (4-6 hours before bed) Caffeine and other stimulants (e.g., medications, drinks) activate neurobiological systems that maintain wakefulness. Alcohol requires metabolization and this physiological arousal can fragment sleep, despite seeming to induce sleepiness initially.



Do relaxing activities pre-sleep. Relaxing activities can promote sleepiness by reducing physiological arousal and minimizing thinking. Conversely, work or planning activities at bedtime can delay sleep, so avoid them. Ideas: stretching, calm music, slow breathing, shower.



Make a worry list. Falling asleep is harder if you are worrying or thinking about emotional things. So set aside a few minutes before bed and list everything that you want to remember for tomorrow, including worries themselves – you can worry about them tomorrow, just not right now.



Do boring activities pre-sleep. Boring activities slow down our cognitive processes, slowing our mind and allowing for sleepiness. Ideas: listen to a radio show or podcast in a language you don't understand, read an uninteresting document (terms and conditions, financial reports, random textbooks)



Improve your sleeping environment. Noises, light, and uncomfortable temperatures have been shown to disrupt continuous sleep. Select comfortable pillows & mattresses, remove distractions, use a sound machine, get darker curtains, wear socks.



Exercise at the right time. Exercise can facilitate or inhibit sleep. *Do* exercise during the day. *Don't* exercise too late in the day (~2 hours before bed) because it can increase physiological arousal and delay sleep.



Get up and try again. If you can't sleep after 20+ minutes, get up and do something relaxing or boring. Actively trying to fall asleep just frustrates you, preventing sleep. *Ideas:* read something boring (junk mail, owner's manuals), sit and mentally list category items (dog breeds). Don't do anything too interesting. Once you're sleepy, go to bed and try to sleep.



Learn about sleep. Obsessing over sleep difficulties or not understanding the science of sleep can perpetuate sleep difficulties. Read scientific articles to learn more about sleep, and thus correct misconceptions or expectations that may be exacerbating sleep-related frustration or anxiety. See References for examples.



Make an appointment with a professional. If you think your sleep difficulties might extend beyond habit change, consult with your doctor or a sleep specialist. The time you take for the appointment could save you invaluable time in the future.

Your Sleep Hygiene Checklist

- Stop pre-sleep electronic use.
- Use bed only for S.
- Remove naps.
- Keep fixed bedtime and wake-up time.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Do relaxing activities pre-sleep.
- Make a worry list.
- Do boring activities pre-sleep.
- Improve your sleeping environment.
- Exercise at the right time.
- Get up and try again
- Learn about sleep
- Make an appointment with a professional.

References

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