

Sleep Hygiene for Adults

- Keep consistent bedtimes and wake times every day of the week. Late weekend nights or sleeping-in can throw off a sleep schedule for days.
- Avoid spending lots of non-sleep time in bed — spending hours lying on a bed doing other activities before bedtime keeps our brains from associating the bed with sleep time.
- Bedroom should be cool, quiet and comfortable. If you find you stare at clocks, then have the clocks turned away from you.
- Bedtime should follow a predictable sequence of events, such as brushing teeth and reading a story.
- Avoid high stimulation activities just before bed, such as watching television, playing videogames, communication with friends, or exercise. Do not do these things during a nighttime awakening either. It is best not to have videogames, televisions, computers or phones in the bedroom.
- Having physical exercise as a part of the day often helps with sleep time many hours later.
- Relaxation techniques such as performing deep, slow abdominal breaths or imagining positive scenes like being on a beach can help a person relax.
- Avoid caffeine (sodas, chocolate, tea, coffee) in the afternoons/evenings. Even if caffeine doesn't prevent falling asleep it can still lead to shallow sleep or frequent awakenings.
- If you are awake in bed tossing and turning, it is better for you to get out of bed to do a low stimulation activity, (i.e. reading) then return to bed later. This keeps the bed from becoming associated with sleeplessness. If still awake after 20-30 minutes, spend another 20 minutes out of bed before lying down again.
- Persons who excessively worry at bedtime can try having a “worry time” scheduled earlier when they are encouraged to think about and discuss their worries with a friend.
- Try to should put yourself to bed drowsy, but still awake. Falling asleep other places forms habits that are difficult to break.
- Security objects at bedtime are often helpful for anyone who needs a transition to feel safe and secure.
- If you are not drowsy at the planned bedtime, you can try a temporary delay of bedtime by 30-minute increments until drowsiness occurs. Following nights, the bedtime should then be gradually advanced earlier until the desired bedtime is reached.
- Keep a sleep diary to keep track of naps, sleep times and activities to find patterns and target problem areas when things are not working.
- Consider a small amount of food shortly before bedtime. There can be some benefit in the “rest and digest” effect that eating a small meal can provide when preparing one's self for sleep. Moderation is key as overdoing this can lead to weight gain.