

Sleep Hygiene Guidelines

- Prepare bedroom with low level, warmer toned lights in the yellow to orange spectrum and avoid blue spectrum lights and blue screens such as computer screens, smart phones and television one hour prior to sleep.
- Avoid eating and drinking much 2 hours and preferably 3 hours prior to sleep as this may distend the stomach and pose as a risk factor for “silent” reflux which may perturb sleep. A cup of Chamomile tea or the like is ok.
- A cup of hot ginger herbal tea with a teaspoon of lemon juice prior to sleep may help with any known reflux and frequent (enigmatic) cough that may occur once you lay down. The ginger is a natural anti-inflammatory and the lemon juice counter intuitively helps neutralize stomach acids.
- Leave the events of the day mentally behind you or any similar stimulating family interactions in preparation for sleep if possible to minimize adreno-cortical stimulation one-hour (preferably longer) prior to sleep.
- Preferably set your mind toward a contemplative versus a stimulating set by reading versus watching TV if possible especially with kids.
- Keep animals out of the bedroom or jumping on the bed during the night if possible unless they remain peaceful and quite throughout the night.
- The bedroom should be set up as a sanctuary for sleep and amenities such as essential oils and spa type music will foster an environment for the brain to transition toward its natural sleep cycle releasing the normal sleep neurotransmitters such as GABA.
- If you are using an oral sleep appliance the use of warm, moist heat 30-60 minutes prior to insertion may be quite helpful. Warm a bowl with hot water (sauna temperature) and dip a couple of wash clothes and wring out excess water and apply to both sides of the face for 15-20 minutes. As the towels cool, re-warm in the hot water. Warm compresses do not have the same beneficial effect of relaxing the masticatory muscles.
- The use of a natural sleep supplement such as melatonin may be helpful if needed especially for shift workers (2-4 mg) as needed. Natural sleep without this is best once the normal sleep cycle is established. Ironically, sleep medications such as Ambien and Lunesta depress slow wave delta (deep) sleep even though they facilitates initial quick drowsiness. These meds may be helpful on occasion.
- Keeping a regular sleep cycle with regular sleep hours is best versus changing night to night even on weekends.
- There are many web sites that address sleep hygiene if you wish to learn more. The simplest solutions are often the best and good sleep is typically a conscious choice.
- Limiting daytime naps to 30 minutes. Napping does not make up for inadequate nighttime sleep. However, a short nap of 20-30 minutes can help to improve mood, alertness and performance.
- Avoiding stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine close to bedtime. And when it comes to alcohol, moderation is key. While alcohol is well-known to help you fall asleep faster, too much close to bedtime can disrupt sleep in the second half of the night as the body begins to process the alcohol.
- Exercising to promote good quality sleep. As little as 10 minutes of aerobic exercise, such as walking or cycling, can drastically improve nighttime sleep quality. For the best night’s sleep, most people should avoid strenuous workouts close to bedtime. However, the effect of intense nighttime exercise on sleep differs from person to person, so find out what works best for you.
- Steering clear of food that can be disruptive right before sleep. Heavy or rich foods, fatty or fried meals, spicy dishes, citrus fruits, and carbonated drinks can trigger indigestion for some people. When this occurs close to bedtime, it can lead to painful heartburn that disrupts sleep.
- Making sure that the sleep environment is pleasant. Mattress and pillows should be comfortable. The bedroom should be cool – between 60 and 67 degrees – for optimal sleep. Bright light from lamps, cell phone and TV screens can make it difficult to fall asleep, so turn those light off or adjust them when possible. Consider using blackout curtains, eye shades, ear plugs, "white noise" machines, humidifiers, fans and other devices that can make the bedroom more relaxing.