

## Tips & Strategies to Get the Best Sleep Possible!

### Caffeine

- Caffeine disturbs sleep, even in people who do not think they experience a stimulating effect.
- Can remain in your system for up to 8 hours.
- Avoid coffee, tea, soda, chocolate, and many OTC medications (Excedrin).

### Alcohol

- Although alcohol can promote the onset of sleep, as it is metabolized sleep becomes disturbed and fragmented.
- It will likely produce light sleep, and can result in early morning awaking.
- Limit use to small quantities and try to avoid near bedtime.

### Regular Exercise

- Increased physical activity is one of the most effective methods of improving sleep.
- Consistency is key!
- It may take several weeks for the effects to become noticeable.
- We need to burn a certain amount of energy each day.
- Being physically tired is essential to getting a good night's sleep!
- Avoid exercise within 2 hours of bedtime.

### Eating

- A light snack can promote sleep.
- Avoid heavy meals.
- If you suffer from acid reflux, be especially careful of heavy meals and spices in the evening.
- It may help to elevate your head with some pillows.
- Do not go to bed too-hungry or too full.

### Bedroom Environment

- Think comfort, cool, dark, quiet
- Get comfortable!
- Mattress - not too soft or too firm
- Pillow – right height & firmness
- Consider clothing, sheets, blankets, etc.

### Temperature

- Best sleeping temperature is 65°-68°
- Avoid extremes of heat or cold

### Noise

- Constant noise (white noise) can be helpful for some individuals (i.e. fan, clothes dryer, etc.).
- Reduce noise with ear plugs or a sound machine.

### Light

- The bedroom should be as dark as possible.
- Use black out shades or sleep masks if needed.
- Begin turning down lights 1-2 hours before bed.
- Use nightlights in the hall or bathroom to avoid bright light.
- Melatonin – hormone produced during darkness to help you sleep

### Limit Time in Bed

- The bed should be reserved for sleep & sex only!
- Avoid watching TV, reading, lap top, etc.
- Mind will learn the bed is a cue to sleep.
- Don't lay in bed for extended times not sleeping.
- 15 Minute Rule – If you aren't asleep after 15-20 minutes, get up & do something outside the bedroom that is relaxing. Return to bed when sleepy.
- Tiredness vs. Sleepiness
- Sleepy – yawning, head bobbing, eyes closing, etc.
- Tired – general low energy; does not lead to sleep.

### Avoid Naps

- Daytime naps will affect nighttime sleep often resulting in lighter, more restless sleep, difficulty falling asleep, or early morning awakening.
- It is best to avoid a nap altogether and push yourself to get moving!
- If you must nap, keep it brief, and no more than 15 minutes.
- Especially avoid napping during late afternoon and evening hours.

### Regular Sleep Schedule

- Keep a regular sleep schedule – 7 days per week!
- Get up at the same time every day.
- This may be hard initially, but it can significantly improve sleep long-term.
- Try to maintain a consistent bedtime, but go to bed only when sleepy.
- Helps set your circadian rhythm so that your body learns to sleep at a desired time.
- Get out in the sunlight soon after waking. The bright sunlight (or any bright light) tells your body's natural biological clock that its time to wake up, and that same clock will then be set to tell your body its time to go to sleep about 14 to 16 hours later.
- Your body will naturally begin to feel sleepy at the designated bedtime.



### Establish a Bedtime Routine

- Develop a bedtime ritual, or a sequence of activities that you repeat each night before bed.
- We think of bedtime routines for children, but often forget they are important for adults.
- Each step in the sequence is a cue to your body to prepare for sleep.
- Your routine might include: getting clothes and other items ready for the next day, a hot shower or bath, listening to music, herbal tea, etc.

### Avoid Stimulating Activities

- Avoid stimulating mental & physical activities before bedtime.
- Gradually decrease light levels 1-2 hours before bedtime.
- Avoid television & computer screen for one hour or more before bed.
- Although it may feel relaxing, the lights, colors, and sounds are stimulating the brain!
- Especially avoid watching or reading programs or material that may cause anxiety or stress (i.e. TV News programs).

### Hot Shower or Bath

- Spending 20 minutes in a tub of hot water 1-2 hours prior to bedtime may promote sleep and is strongly recommended.
- When you are in the hot water, body temperature increases.
- When you step out, you get cold, body temperature decreases, and this is a cue for sleep.

### Treat Emotional Needs

- Depression and anxiety disorders commonly interfere with sleep.
- Do what you can to manage the stress in your life
- Make sure to get emotional support and express your feelings to others to help you sleep.
- Consider professional assistance (a therapist or counselor) if needed.
- Increase physical activity, spend time doing hobbies you enjoy, and with people you enjoy .

### Medications

- There are many over-the-counter and prescription medication that may be able to aid people regarding sleeping problems. It is recommended to consult your personal care provider regarding what type of medication is recommended.

### Night Shift Workers

- Noise & light prevention should be given top priority!
- Wear ear plugs, turn off phone/ringer, consider a source of “white noise”, etc.
- Use darkening curtains and/or an eye mask.
- Allow yourself time to “wind down” after work.
- Keep the same routine everyday, if possible.
- All other strategies and tips are even more important for you!!!

### Sleep Apnea

- A sleep disorder characterized by abnormal pauses in breathing or instances of abnormally low breathing, during sleep.
- Pauses can last from a few seconds to minutes and may occur 5 to 30 times or more an hour.
- Risk factors include obesity, smoking, age, and diabetes.
- Signs include heavy snoring and daytime fatigue.
- See your personal care provider for more information on sleep apnea

### Relaxation ideas

- Deep breaths
- Learn relaxing yoga poses, Tai Chi
- Practice meditation or prayer just before, or while in bed
- Visualize something peaceful
- Visualize something boring
- Counting sheep
- Warm milk
- Heating pad on areas of pain or tension
- Massage

### Time to get up already?

- Fight the urge to sleep in! Don't hit the SNOOZE!
- This habit reduces overall sleep quality!
- Specifically, it hinders the body's collective sleep and reduces the time spent in REM (rapid eye movement).
- Use positive self talk to push yourself out of bed – do the opposite of your urge and remind yourself how good you will feel later.
- Consider exercise soon after waking.
- Stay busy and keep moving on days that are especially difficult.
- Use small amounts of caffeine if necessary, but remember to stop at least 8 hours before bedtime.
- At times, chronic sleep problems can indicate an underlying medical illness.
- If you have tried numerous strategies and sleep problems persist, be sure to share this with your physician.

