

## Good Sleep Hygiene Handout

The most common cause of insomnia is a change in your daily routine.

For example, traveling, change in work hours, disruption of other behaviors (eating, exercise, leisure, etc.), and relationship conflicts can all cause sleep problems.

Paying attention to good sleep hygiene is the most important thing you can do to maintain good sleep.

### **Do:**

1. Go to bed at the same time each day.
2. Get up from bed at the same time each day. Try to maintain a time close to this on weekends.
3. Get regular exercise each day, preferably in the morning. There is good evidence that regular exercise improves restful sleep. This includes stretching and aerobic exercise.
4. Get regular exposure to outdoor or bright lights, especially in the late afternoon.
5. Keep the temperature in your bedroom comfortable.
6. Keep the bedroom quiet when sleeping.
7. Keep the bedroom dark enough to facilitate sleep.
8. Use your bed only for sleep and sexual activity. This will help you associate your bed with sleep, not with other activities like paying bills, talking on the phone, watching TV.
9. Establish a regular, relaxing bedtime routine. Relaxing rituals prior to bedtime may include a warm bath or shower, aromatherapy, reading, or listening to soothing music.
10. Use a relaxation exercise just before going to sleep or use relaxing imagery. Even if you don't fall asleep, this will allow your body to rest and feel relaxed.
11. Keep your feet and hands warm. Wear warm socks to bed.
12. Designate another time to write down problems & possible solutions, instead focus on the things that you are grateful for and positive things that happen in the day.

**Don't:**

1. Exercise just before going to bed. Try to keep it no closer than 3-4 hours before bed.
2. Engage in stimulating activity just before bed, such as playing a competitive game, watching an exciting program on television or movie, or having an important discussion with a loved one.
3. Have caffeine in the evening (coffee, many teas, chocolate, sodas, etc.)
4. Read or watch television in bed.
5. Use alcohol to help you sleep. It actually interrupts your sleep cycle.
6. Go to bed too hungry or too full.
7. Take another person's sleeping pills.
8. Take over-the-counter sleeping pills, without your doctor's knowledge. Tolerance can develop rapidly with these medications.
9. Take daytime naps. If you do, keep them to no more than 20 minutes and not close to bedtime.
10. Command yourself to go to sleep. This only makes your mind and body more alert.
11. Watch the clock or count minutes; this usually causes more anxiety, which keeps you up.
12. Lie in bed awake for more than 20-30 minutes. Instead, get up, go to a different room (or different part of the bedroom), participate in a quiet activity (e.g. non-excitable reading), and then return to bed when you feel sleepy. Do not turn on lights or sit in front of a bright TV or computer, this will stimulate your brain to wake up. Stay in a dark, quiet place. Do this as many times during the night as needed.
13. Succumb to maladaptive thoughts like: "Oh no, look how late it is, I'll never get to sleep" or "I must have eight hours of sleep each night, if I get less than eight hours of sleep I will get sick." Challenge your concerns and avoid catastrophizing. Remember that we cannot fully control our sleep process. Trying too hard to control it will make you more tense and more awake.
14. Change your daytime routine the next day if you didn't sleep well. Even if you have a bad night sleep and are tired it is important that you try to keep your daytime activities the same as you had planned. That is, don't avoid activities or stay in bed late because you feel tired. This can reinforce the insomnia.
15. Increase caffeine intakes the next day, this can keep you up again the following night.