

Sleep Hygiene

Sleep Strategies and Checklists

Sleep Strategies

Healthy sleep habits can make a big difference in your quality of life! Having healthy sleep habits is often referred to as having good sleep hygiene. Try to keep the following sleep practices daily:

1. **Stick to a sleep schedule of the same bedtime and wake up time, even on the weekends.** This helps to regulate your body's clock and could help you fall asleep and stay asleep for the night.
2. **Practice a relaxing bedtime ritual.** A relaxing, routine activity right before bedtime conducted away from bright lights helps separate your sleep time from activities that can cause excitement, stress or anxiety which can make it more difficult to fall asleep, get sound and deep sleep or remain asleep.
3. **If you have trouble sleeping, avoid naps, especially in the afternoon.** Power napping may help you get through the day, but if you find that you can't fall asleep at bedtime, eliminating even short catnaps may help.
4. **Exercise daily.** Vigorous exercise is best, but even light exercise is better than no activity. Exercise at any time of day, but not at the expense of your sleep.
5. **Evaluate your room.** Design your sleep environment to establish the conditions you need for sleep. Your bedroom should be cool – between 60 and 67 degrees. Your bedroom should also be free from any noise that can disturb your sleep. Finally, your bedroom should be free from any light. Check your room for noises or other distractions. This includes a bed partner's sleep disruptions such as snoring. Consider using blackout curtains, eye shades, ear plugs, "white noise" machines, humidifiers, fans and other devices.
6. **Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillows.** Make sure your mattress is comfortable and supportive. The one you have been using for years may have exceeded its life expectancy – about 9 or 10 years for most good quality mattresses. Have comfortable pillows and make the room attractive and inviting for sleep but also free of allergens that might affect you and objects that might cause you to slip or fall if you have to get up during the night.
7. **Use bright light to help manage your circadian rhythms.** Avoid bright light in the evening and expose yourself to sunlight in the morning. This will keep your circadian rhythms in check.
8. **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and heavy meals in the evening.** Alcohol, cigarettes and caffeine can disrupt sleep. Eating big or spicy meals can cause discomfort from indigestion that can make

it hard to sleep. If you can, avoid eating large meals for two to three hours before bedtime. Try a light snack 45 minutes before bed if you're still hungry.

9. **Wind down.** Your body needs time to shift into sleep mode, so spend the last hour before bed doing a calming activity such as reading. For some people, using an electronic device such as a laptop can make it hard to fall asleep, because the particular type of light emanating from the screens of these devices is activating to the brain. If you have trouble sleeping, avoid electronics before bed or in the middle of the night.
10. **If you can't sleep, go into another room and do something relaxing until you feel tired.** It is best to take work materials, computers and televisions out of the sleeping environment. Use your bed only for sleep and sex to strengthen the association between bed and sleep. If you associate a particular activity or item with anxiety about sleeping, omit it from your bedtime routine.
11. **If you're still having trouble sleeping,** don't hesitate to speak with your doctor or to find a sleep professional. You may also benefit from recording your sleep in a Sleep Diary to help you better evaluate common patterns or issues you may see with your sleep or sleeping habits.

Sleep Checklists



Photo credit: <https://tidal.com/browse/album/56105447>

Sleep checklists can help us to follow our sleep hygiene goals!

There are two checklists to choose from below. Pick one or both!

Or, create your own and include some of these items, or just your own ideas!

Checklist Choice #1



Sleep Hygiene Checklist

Go to bed earlier

Start with an hour earlier and increase from there as needed. Try to wake up naturally, but set an alarm as a safety net.

Get outside

At least 30 minutes of daylight every day. If that's not possible or you live in an area where daylight isn't all that bright, then get a blue light or SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) and use it every day.

Blue blocking glasses

Cool, right? Yellow lenses block blue light, which tricks you into staying awake.

Dim the lights at night

Dim, yellow, or warm bulbs are best at night. Save the daylight and white bulbs for daytime. If you can't control it, be sure to wear those blue blocking glasses!

Buy a blue light

Get a blue (or SAD) light, especially if you live in an area that's often dark, rainy, or overcast.

No screens before bed

Read a book made of actual paper, or use that old Kindle with the paperwhite screen, but avoid phone, tablet, television, and computer screens close to bed time.

Dark, cool, and quiet room

You'll sleep better if the room is dark, cool, and quiet. Curtains or a sleep mask can make it dark, and earplugs or a white noise machine can help if the room isn't quiet enough.

Watch the caffeine

Coffee, tea, soda, and chocolate can all be loaded with caffeine, which can keep you from sleeping. Cut down on your intake if you have trouble getting to sleep, particularly after noon.

Log your time in bed

If you or your step tracker know how much you slept, even better, but log time in bed at a minimum.

Nap if you need it

Yes, nap if you need to, but the more and better you sleep at night, the less you'll need to.

Do you snore? Get a sleep apnea test!

Lack of enough or quality sleep can lead to heart, metabolism, and blood sugar issues, and worse.

Checklist Choice #2

The following strategies can help you get a better night's sleep!

Check off any that you try by putting a check mark next to the line like this:

Fill in the blanks as you wish! For example, you can choose a time to go to bed every night and every morning in #1 and #2.

1. Go to bed at the same time every night (TIME: _____). _____
Get up at the same time every morning (TIME: _____). _____
2. Exercise daily, but not too close to bedtime. _____
3. Don't use tobacco. _____
4. Don't use caffeine in the late afternoon or evening. _____
5. Don't drink alcohol after dinner. _____
6. Eat a light snack before bedtime. _____
7. Write out a list of worries or a to-do list for the following day; then allow your mind to tune out such worries and distractions. _____
8. Don't eat, read, study, or watch television in bed. _____
9. Relax before bedtime with a book, music, or some relaxation exercises; give yourself time to wind down from your day's activities. _____
10. If you don't fall asleep in 15–20 minutes, get out of bed and do something boring until you feel sleepy. Do the same if you wake up and can't fall asleep again. _____

Adapted from sleepfoundation.org/articles/healthy-sleep-tips
by Heather Saxon, M.A., RYT-200 on 3/17/19.

Please keep in mind that advocates are different from counselors and have a focus on education and safety rather than on treating any emotional, mental, or behavioral issues. We also can't give advice or tell people what to do because we respect your right to make choices that work best for you. However, we do have many resources available, if you choose! Talk to any Trauma Team advocate for more information about resources, and pick the ones that feel right for you!