

Acute Services Division



Information about ...

# Sleep Hygiene



## **Sleep Hygiene**

Sleep Hygiene is a term we use to describe good sleep habits. There are things you can do to give yourself the best chance of a good refreshing sleep. If you are having trouble sleeping, paying particular attention to these details may help.

## **Sleep Pattern**

1. Try to fix a time for going to bed and waking up. Your body clock will tell you when you feel sleepy. You then become accustomed to falling asleep at a certain time. Even if you are not working it is essential to have good sleep hygiene. Going to bed too early can also result in a disturbed sleep.
2. If you do not fall asleep within 30 minutes, go to another room and do some quiet activity.
3. Avoid napping during the day as this can affect the quality of your sleep. If you must nap, make sure it is early afternoon and keep it short (30–40 minutes).
4. Regular exercise promotes good sleep but avoid strenuous exercise within 2 hours of your bedtime. Before dinner is a better time.
5. Understand your sleep need. Most people need between 6-8 hours per night. This varies from person to person and reduces with age.

## **Sleep Environment**

1. Make your bedroom as restful as possible. Keep the temperature cool (not cold), block out as much light and noise as possible.
2. Be comfortable, make sure your mattress and bedding are comfortable and in good condition.
3. Use your bed only for sleeping and sex. Do not use the bed as an extended lounge or study area. Make sure the bed is associated with going to sleep.
4. Do not watch television in bed. Do not use your laptop or smart phone in bed. These activities are stimulating activity which is more likely to keep you awake.

## **Before going to bed**

1. Establish a routine such as a warm bath or light reading before going to bed to help you relax. Avoid television.
2. Consider a light snack but avoid going to bed too hungry or too full.
3. Avoid caffeine in the late afternoon and evenings, remember chocolate and fizzy juice contain caffeine as well as tea and coffee.
4. Avoid Alcohol to 'help you sleep'. Many feel this helps in getting off to sleep but it causes a fragmented sleep and to waken early.

## Awakening Overnight

1. People awaken overnight for many reasons. If you cannot get back to sleep within 20 minutes get up and go to another room. Do some quiet activity and try to keep the light dim. When you feel sleepy, go back to bed.
2. Do not perform engaging activity e.g. watching television
3. Do not continuously look at the clock.
4. Try to leave problems and worries aside.

## Other Factors

1. Many physical factors can upset sleep:
  - Arthritis, heartburn, menstruation, hot flushes, cramps, depression, chronic pain problems.
2. Medications can interfere with sleep therefore you should take these at the time of day prescribed.
3. We do not generally recommend sleeping tablets are but we give them to some people on a short-term basis.

**When trying to establish a good sleep pattern it is important to stick to a routine with set sleeping and waking times for several weeks until it becomes established. It is also important to avoid daytime naps during this time.**