

# Sleep Hygiene

## Description

- Sleep hygiene is a set of good habits that promote sound sleep.
- It is the most effective way to manage most cases of insomnia.
- Be patient and stick to the program – habits are formed, and changed, over time.

## The Setting

- Only sleep in a bed in your bedroom.
- Use the bed only for sleep and sexual activity, not for reading, eating, watching TV, etc.
- Make sure your bedroom is as dark and quiet as possible.

## Diet

- Avoid alcohol and caffeine for four hours before bed.
- Avoid food for two hours before bed.
- Caffeine in the morning or at lunchtime may be helpful to avoid naps.
- Protein at breakfast and lunch may help you stay awake during the day.
- Carbohydrates (e.g. pasta or potatoes) at dinner may help you fall asleep in the evening.

## Activity

- Regular exercise is very helpful – it keeps you awake during the day and helps you relax.
- Avoid exercise for two hours before bed, however; it is too stimulating
- Avoid any stimulating activities in the last hour before bed (arguments, stressful work projects, suspenseful movies, etc.)
- Read books, take a bath, listen to music or find some other relaxing activity to do before bed.

## Timing

- Get up at the same time each morning. (Even weekends!)
- Do not take naps. (This is very important.)
- Take a walk in the bright sunshine during your sleepy period each afternoon if necessary.
- Go to bed as late as it takes to ensure that you fall – and stay – asleep.
- Gradually make your bedtime earlier. Move it back perhaps 15 minutes every 2 to 3 days until you reach your target bedtime.
- Your target bedtime should be 8 hours before you rise. (Plan on getting 8 hours of sleep per night.)
- If you lie in bed for more than 15 minutes without falling asleep, go to another room and do something relaxing for about 30 minutes and then return to bed.

An alternate strategy:

Instead of gradually moving your bedtime back, start by staying up all night one night and going to bed at your goal bedtime the very next night.

## Call Your Health Provider If...

- The above strategies do not work within one or two months.
- You believe a temporary sleep aid medication would be helpful.
- You experience significant anxiety or panic attacks.
- You have signs of depression: weight loss, loss of interest in many things, crying spells, lack of concentration, poor appetite, suicidal thoughts.