

TIPS

Sleep Hygiene

Sleep hygiene is a term that describes good sleep habits. It encompasses various practices that are needed to have normal, quality nighttime sleep and full daytime alertness. The following tips can help promote sleep hygiene.



Limit daytime naps. Avoid taking naps in the afternoon, because this can interfere with nighttime sleep. If you must nap, limit it to less than an hour. Also, never take a nap after 3 pm.

Avoid wake-promoting agents. Consuming caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, and other chemicals can prevent you from falling asleep or disturb your sleep. Try to avoid consuming these wake-promoting agents eight hours before bedtime.

Go to bed only when you are tired. If you are not asleep after 20 minutes of struggling to fall asleep, get out of bed. Try going to another room and doing something relaxing, such as reading or listening to music, until you are tired enough to sleep.

Have the proper sleep environment. A room that is quiet, dark, and cool can help promote better sleep. Reduce the distraction of outside noise with earplugs or a white noise machine. Use heavy curtains, blackout shades, or an eye mask to block light. Make sure your room is well ventilated and at a temperature between 60° and 75° Fahrenheit.

Keep sleep and wake times consistent. Go to bed at the same time every night, even on the weekends. Also, wake up at the same time each day. This will help to set your body's internal clock and optimize the quality of your sleep.

Seek natural light. Getting the right amount of natural light during the day is important for older people who may not be able to venture outside as frequently as adults and children. Light exposure helps maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle.

Ditch the devices. Turn off all electronic devices with screens, including computers and cell phones, an hour before bedtime. The light from these devices may affect your sleep if left on closer to your bedtime.

Seek professional help when needed. If you consistently find it difficult to fall or stay asleep, feel tired, or feel not rested during the day, despite spending enough time in bed at night, you may have a sleep disorder. Contact your family healthcare provider or a sleep specialist if these conditions persist.

This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at info@neurologyreviews.com.

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