

HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS*

1. Regiment your sleep schedule – go to bed at the same time each evening and wake up at the same time as often as possible.
2. Exercise regularly each day – it is best to finish exercise 6 hours before bedtime.
3. Avoid naps but check with your physician first (in some sleep disorders, naps are beneficial).
4. Take a hot bath to raise your body temperature within two hours of bedtime. A warm drink may help you relax as well as warm you up.
5. Do not smoke after 7:00pm or stop smoking entirely if possible.
6. Avoid caffeine in the evening and close to bedtime. Try to limit caffeine intake to 3 cups per day, prior to 10am.
7. Decrease intake of alcoholic beverages as much as possible. Alcohol can disrupt sleep over the second half of the sleep period.
8. Avoid eating a full meal or drinking 3 hours before bedtime. A light bedtime snack may be helpful.
9. If you have trouble with regurgitation, be especially careful to avoid heavy or spiced foods in the evening. The head of the bed may need to be raised.¹
10. Keep your room dark, quiet, well ventilated and at a comfortable temperature throughout the night. Ear plugs and eye shades are OK.
11. Reading before lights out may be helpful if it is not occupationally related.
12. Write down your thoughts or concerns in a sleep diary. List each problem or concern and a one sentence solution for each. Set aside time the following day to address these concerns and solutions. Forgive yourself and forgive others.
13. Learn simple self-hypnosis to use if you wake up at night. Do not try too hard to sleep; instead, concentrate on the pleasant feeling of relaxation.
14. Keep clock faces turned away, and do not check the time when you wake up at night.
15. Use stress management during the daytime.
16. Mattresses and pillows should not be too soft or too firm.
17. Use your bedroom only for sleep or for sex; do not work or engage in other activities that lead to prolonged arousal.
18. If you are not drowsy and are unable to fall asleep within 10-15 minutes, leave your bedroom and engage in a quiet activity elsewhere. Do not permit yourself to fall asleep outside the bedroom. Return to bed when, and only when, you are sleepy. Repeat this process as often as necessary throughout the night.

(* Adapted from the Principles and Practice of Sleep Medicine; Ed: Kruger, Roth, Dement)