

SLEEP HYGIENE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Caffeine

Coffee is a stimulant and tends to keep people awake. Caffeine usually reaches its maximum concentration in the bloodstream within an hour of intake. Within three hours, only half of the caffeine has been eliminated from one's system, and for some people, it can take considerably longer. People with insomnia may be more sensitive to caffeine's stimulating effects because of a greater predisposition to hyperarousal. Moderate use during the day is unlikely to affect nighttime sleep, but heavy use of caffeine throughout the day should be avoided and all caffeine products should be stopped within 4-6 hours of bedtime. **Discontinue caffeine use 4 to 6 hours prior to bedtime.**

Recommendation 2: Nicotine

Nicotine is another central nervous system stimulant and disrupts sleep much the same as caffeine. Although smokers may experience relaxation, the overall effect of nicotine is stimulating and interfering with sleep (increased heart rate, blood pressure). Smoking around bedtime may also lead to conditioned awakenings at night when the person wakes up and quickly craves a cigarette. **Avoid smoking around bedtime and upon night awakenings.**



Recommendation 3: Alcohol

Unlike caffeine and nicotine, alcohol is a central nervous system depressant. Nonetheless, it is the substance more likely to disrupt sleep. People typically metabolize alcohol at the rate of one drink per hour but the withdrawal effects may persist for another 2 to 4 hours, even after the blood level has returned near zero. It is this period of time when the alcoholic depressant effect is wearing off that people often become restless and wake up during the night. Thus, even a moderate and socially acceptable amount of alcohol between dinner and bedtime can disturb nighttime sleep. **Avoid alcohol 4 to 6 hours before bedtime.**

Recommendation 4: Exercise

Regular aerobic exercise can improve sleep, but the benefit depends on an individual's physical fitness, the amount of energy expended, and the timing of the exercise. Regular aerobic exercise in physically-fit individuals improves sleep patterns by increasing deep sleep. Sustained and vigorous exercise in untrained and sedentary individuals can initially have the opposite effect, producing lighter, more restless sleep. Overly-strenuous exercise even in fit individuals can also temporarily disrupt sleep. Exercising just before bedtime also interferes with sleep onset by producing a stimulating effect. Conversely, physical exercise in the morning may have minimal impact on nighttime sleep because it is too remote in time from the actual sleep. The best time to exercise is late afternoon or early evening. **Avoid vigorous exercise within 2 hours of bedtime.**

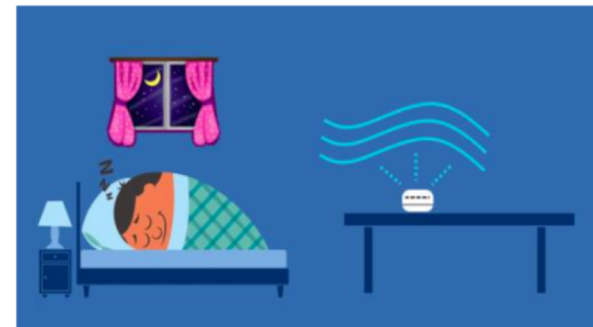


Recommendation 5: Diet

Hunger can cause wakefulness, while food intake can promote sleep. The benefit of eating, however, depends on the timing, type, and amount of food consumed. For example, a light snack before bed may help you fall and stay asleep, whereas a heavy meal may disrupt sleep because your digestive system has to work overtime. Excessive fluid intake near bedtime can also interrupt sleep by waking you to urinate. Avoid snacking if you wake in the middle of the night, because nighttime awakenings can quickly become conditioned to hunger. Many people with insomnia ask if certain foods or beverages can help them sleep. **Do not go to bed on an empty stomach.**

Recommendation 6: Room Temperature

Excessively hot or cold environments can all interfere with sleep; avoid extremes. Although there is no ideal room temperature for everyone, extreme temperature disturb sleep. **Keep your room cool but not cold.**



Recommendation 7: Noise

Noise from a snoring bedmate, a neighbor's barking dog, or traffic is not only annoying but also disruptive to sleep. Correcting noise problems obviously depend on the source of the noise. **Keep your bedroom quiet.**

Recommendation 8: Lighting

For a good night's sleep, the room must be dark. Excessive lighting, especially bright white light, can cause sleep problems even in the best of sleepers. To ensure darkness, use thick curtains, window shades, or even a blanket to prevent illumination from street lights. Turn off all inside lights and consider turning off outside lights if you can. **Keep your bedroom dark.**