



Sleep Hygiene Tips and Tricks

The importance of sleep cannot be over-rated and yet it oftentimes remains elusive. Use this checklist to begin getting your sleep back in order as you continue your path to mental / physical well-being and recovery.

Sleep Hygiene Pre-checklist

- Get exercise during the day / Spend time outside during the day / Breathe deeply and get some sun
- Practice basic mindfulness during the day – NO NAPS!
- Limit alcohol consumption and avoid mood-altering substances except those that are prescribed / No stimulants past noon and this includes coffee, soda, and caffeinated teas
- Turn your bedroom into a sanctuary – the only thing your bed should be used for is sleep and sex – keep your work and your electronics out of the bedroom / reduce clutter in the bedroom / invest in a quality mattress and pillows / wear loose-fitting PJs, or better yet, sleep in the buff
- Treat any underlying medical conditions – talk to your doctor about sleep difficulties

Sleep Hygiene Checklist

- Establish structure and a schedule – go to bed and wake up at the same time every day / Begin your sleep hygiene rituals at the same time each evening and start about 1 hour before bedtime – whenever possible, complete each task in the same order
- Dim overhead lights / turn down the temperature / reduce stimulation overall and practice self-soothe behaviors
- Eliminate electronics – tv off, phone off, no more Facebook, etc. / If you need entertainment to help wind down, try a book or listening to calming and soft music
- Complete physical hygiene necessities – bathing, teeth-brushing, pajamas, etc.
- No food or drink within 1 hour of bedtime, better even if you can make it 2-3 hours
- Try some gentle yoga or stretching / A warm bath
- Once in bed, complete a body scan – observe any tense muscles and consciously relax them – progressive muscle relaxation is a wonderful tool for this
- Develop a bedtime mantra and use it with deep breathing exercises
- If you are lying awake for more than 20 minutes, get up and do something calming until you feel tired and ready to try again. Lying in bed tossing and turning will only sabotage you.

Miscellaneous things to try

- Guided meditation
- Essential oils including lavender, chamomile, etc. / Soothing tea / Melatonin
- Try a weighted blanket
- If its anxious thoughts keeping you awake, keep a notebook and pen near your bed and jot down things to be worried about tomorrow.
- Seriously...avoid the booze. I hate to break it to you, but drunk sleep is not good sleep.
- Consider whether your sleep issues could be a matter of sleep avoidance, and if so, seriously consider seeing a specialist.

Sleep hygiene is a very personal thing and what works for one person may not work for you at all. Use these ideas as a guideline, but don't be afraid to experiment and learn what is truly effective for you. If something isn't working, chuck it out the window and try something else! And if sleep truly remains elusive, consider talking to your doctor or therapist about alternative treatments or options that you might try. Good luck and sweet dreams!