Sleep Hygiene Techniques: Tips for Better Sleep

Why Sleep is Important:
Experts recommend that adults should get 7 or more hours of sleep each night. Not only is the number of hours (quantity) of sleep important, but good sleep quality is important so that you wake up feeling refreshed.

Good sleep is important for your overall physical and mental health – it helps with learning and memory, alertness, energy, mood, regulating weight, and immune system function, among other things.

Poor sleep is linked with many chronic conditions, such as heart disease, stroke, obesity, depression, and diabetes. Not getting enough sleep also puts us at risk for drowsy driving and motor vehicle accidents, and affects our ability to think and function at our best throughout the day.

What is Sleep Hygiene?
Sleep hygiene is a set of healthy sleep habits that are used to improve the quality of your sleep. Changing sleep behaviors may also limit the need for sleep medications, many of which can have side effects.

Do's:
- Go to bed at the same time every night and wake up at the same time every morning (even on the weekends).
- Try setting alarms to remind yourself that it’s time to go to bed and to wake up at a regular time in the morning.
- Create a comfortable sleep environment: a bedroom that is dark, quiet, and at a cool/comfortable temperature. Some people find white noise helpful.
- Use the bed for sleep and intimacy only.
- Get regular exercise during the day—this promotes better sleep.
- Remove electronics and screens from your bedroom (TVs, computers, smart phones, tablets, etc).
- Keep a Sleep Diary to track your bedtimes and quality of sleep.
- Try techniques to relax before bed: guided meditation, breathing exercises, stretching/yoga, taking a warm shower/bath, journaling, or reading.
- If you have trouble falling asleep after 20 minutes, or if you find your mind racing and worrying about not sleeping; go into a dark, quiet room and try doing a relaxing activity (without using screens, for example: non-excitable reading). Return to your bedroom when you feel sleepy again.

Don'ts:
- Use your bedroom for other activities – ie working, eating, watching TV. It is best to associate the bedroom with sleeping only.
- Use electronics before bedtime. Limit your screen time for 2-3 hours before bed—the blue light in these devices throw off your circadian rhythms (your body’s internal clock).
- Go to bed too hungry or too full. Avoid large or heavy meals before bedtime.
- Exercise right before bedtime – this increases your body temperature and is stimulating, making it harder to fall asleep.
- Have caffeine (coffee, soda, tea, energy drinks, chocolate) late in the day—avoid caffeine at least 8 hours before bedtime.
- Drink alcohol before bedtime – this disrupts your sleep cycle.
- Take long naps, especially late in the day. If you do need to nap, keep it to 20-30 minutes.
- Watch the clock or fall victim to anxious thoughts about your amount of sleep. Instead try relaxation techniques.

See next page for Additional Resources
Additional Resources:

- Sleep.org (by the National Sleep Foundation)
- cdc.gov/sleep
- https://www.nytimes.com/guides/well/how-to-sleep
- Sleep Diary Worksheet: https://sleepfoundation.org/sites/default/files/SleepDiaryv6.pdf
- Guided Meditations: http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations
- Calm application for guided meditation and sleep relaxation