



IDEAL NEUROLOGY  
CLINIC

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### **Sleep Hygiene: Basic Rules for a Good Night's Sleep**

At some point in their life, everyone has difficulty sleeping. Some people have a predisposition for it, but they can still sleep okay. A provoking event or other stressor can trigger difficulty sleeping in anyone. When someone feels sleepy or otherwise has daytime dysfunction due to poor sleep that is caused by difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up too early for more than three months likely has chronic insomnia. Many other medical conditions can masquerade as chronic insomnia, so it's important to talk to your doctor about any other symptoms you may have.

The following are good practices to keep in order to give yourself your best chance of a good night's sleep.

- 1. Keep a regular sleep schedule.** This means going to bed at around the same time every single night, even weekends, holidays, and vacations; and waking up at the same, fixed time every morning, even on workdays and weekends. The most common cause of insomnia is self-induced sleep deprivation by staying up too late to be productive, catch a television show, etc.
- 2. Exercise regularly,** preferably at least 4-5 hours before bedtime. It's healthy for your body to use up some energy, but exercise can have an energizing effect for a few hours afterward, so best not to do it right before bed.
- 3. Avoid any caffeinated beverages after lunch, or about 1pm.**
- 4. Avoid alcohol near bedtime: no “night cap.”** Though it might make you feel sleepier, alcohol makes your sleep less restful.
- 5. Avoid smoking, but especially in the evening.**
- 6. Do not go to bed hungry.** Have a small, bland but filling, snack before bedtime (e.g., piece of toast with butter, cup of warm milk) if you're prone to getting up in the middle of the night hungry.
- 7. Make the bedroom environment conducive to sleep:** dark, quiet, comfortable temperature, comfortable bed, no distractions or interruptions.
- 8. Avoid prolonged use of light-emitting screens before bedtime.** One hour before bedtime, turn them off.
- 9. Deal with your worries before bedtime.** A good practice is to spend 10 minutes before bed jotting down your thoughts in a journal and making plans for the next day.
- 10. The bedroom should only be used for sleep and sex,** so that you condition your brain to feel sleepy when you go to bed. This means: a) no television, smart phone, reading, eating, worrying, etc. in bed; b) go to bed only when sleepy; c) get out of bed if unable to fall asleep within 20 minutes and go to another room to do something sleep-inducing (e.g., reading something dull); return to bed only when sleepy, and repeat this step as many times as necessary throughout the night; and d) get out of bed after you've woken up. Do not sleep more than necessary to feel rested.
- 11. No naps!**