

Healthy Sleep Hygiene Habits.

Do you ever find yourself staring at the ceiling, unable to fall asleep? Or, you drift off only to wake up throughout the night?

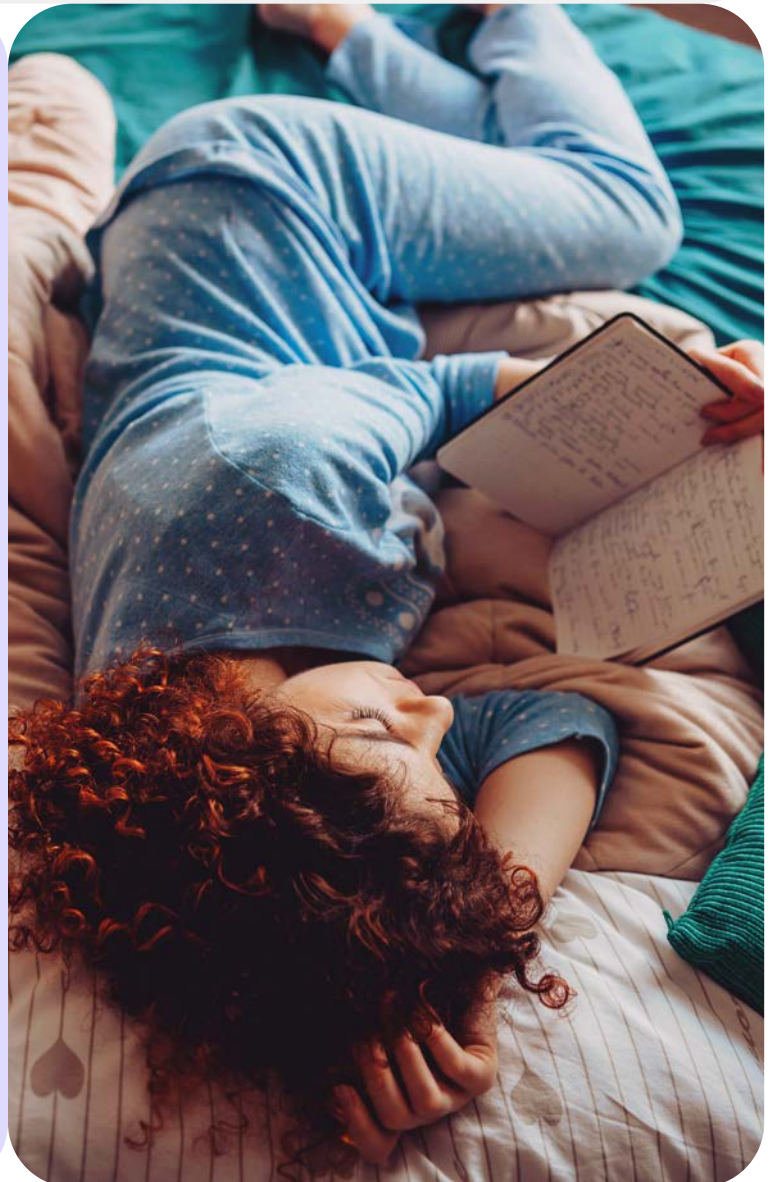
It may be time to consider your sleep hygiene.

Sleep hygiene refers to healthy sleep habits. Good sleep hygiene is important because of how crucial getting good sleep is for your mental and physical health, as well as your overall quality of life. Your behaviors during the day — not just before you go to bed — your food and drink choices, evening routine, and many other activities all play a part in your ability to sleep. Here are some helpful tips:

Keep a consistent sleep schedule. Try to go to sleep and wake up at about the same times every day — even on weekends. This reinforces your body's internal clock, which can make it easier for you to fall asleep and wake up every day. Also, make sure your bedtime allows you to get 7 to 8 hours of sleep.

Create a relaxing bedtime routine and stick with it. A relaxing routine helps you unwind so you're ready to sleep, and may help you fall asleep more quickly. The best time to start your routine is about 30 to 60 minutes before you go to bed. Your routine can include whatever makes you feel most relaxed — unless it involves a device that emits blue light. Here are some ideas:

- Take a warm bath or shower. Not only is the water relaxing in the moment, but the drop in your body temperature as you cool down afterward may make you feel sleepy.
- Try some gentle stretches to help your muscles relax and release tension.
- Spend a few minutes meditating to help calm your body and mind.
- Try listening to some soothing music while you focus on your breathing
- Spend time reading a book, but try to stay away from electronic reading devices.
- Avoid anything stressful or overly stimulating, like emotional conversations or working.





Turn off electronic devices before you go to sleep. Electronic devices like your phone emit blue light, which can reduce the melatonin levels in your body. Melatonin is a chemical that controls your sleep/wake cycle. When your melatonin levels dip, it can be more difficult to fall asleep. Devices that emit blue light can also distract you, keeping your brain alert. This may make it harder to fall asleep.

Exercise regularly. As little as 30 minutes of aerobic exercise per day can improve your sleep quality, as well as your overall health. And if you can exercise outside, that might increase the benefits even more, since exposure to natural light helps regulate your sleep cycle.

Limit your caffeine intake. The effects of caffeine can last 3 to 7 hours after you consume it. This means that your afternoon cup of coffee may keep you awake and alert a lot longer than you'd like. Although it's usually best to limit your caffeine intake to the morning hours, keep in mind that everyone has a different tolerance to caffeine.

Make your sleep environment work for you. A cool, dark, quiet room may help you fall asleep and stay asleep more easily. For most people, a bedroom temperature between 15.6°C and 19.4°C is the optimal temperature for sleeping. It's also important to make sure you have a comfortable mattress, pillows, and bed linens. The more comfortable you are, the easier it may be to fall asleep and stay asleep.

Manage stress before going to bed. Thinking about things you're worried about can keep you awake at night. To help prevent your worries from keeping you awake:

- Write down your worries before going to bed to help get them out of your head.
- If your to-do list stresses you out, write that down as well. Prioritize what you need to do tomorrow and the rest of the week, then try to relax.
- Try meditation before bed to calm your mind.

