



OPAL Institute, Oregon Passionate Aging and Living  
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## Sleep Hygiene Strategies

### Daytime Tips

- 1) Get up at the same time each day (having a consistent getting up time is more important than a consistent going to bed time). Set an alarm if it is needed.
- 2) Get out of bed right after you wake up. Too much extra time in bed can lead to problems sleeping at night.
- 3) Tidy your bed in the morning, since having the step of turning down the bed clothes at night is a desirable addition to the night time routine.
- 4) Restrict or eliminate day time napping.
- 5) Eat regular, healthy meals. Eat at the same time each day. Several small meals can work better than 1 to 2 large meals.
- 6) Do not drink coffee, tea, sodas, or cocoa after noon. They contain caffeine and can interfere with normal sleep. If you are especially sensitive to caffeine, you may wish to avoid it all together.
- 7) Do not drink alcohol after dinner. People often think that it helps them to sleep, but in fact it makes sleep shallower during the night and disrupts sleep. Alcohol can also make snoring and sleep apnea worse.
- 8) Be cautious when taking headache and cold medicines, as some contain stimulants that can affect sleep.
- 9) Stop smoking. Smoking stimulates the body and affects sleep.
- 10) Increase or start doing daily exercise. Regular exercise deepens sleep. Experiment with the best time for you to exercise, noting that exercise within 2 hours before bedtime can be stimulating and make it harder to get to sleep.

## Nighttime Tips

- 1) Use the bed for sexual activity and sleeping only (no television watching, and preferably no reading either, in bed).
- 2) Get into bed only when you are sleepy.
- 3) Avoid over-the-counter sleeping medications. They may help you fall asleep faster, but do not tend to help establish deeper sleep. They can also make snoring and sleep apnea worse.
- 4) Wear comfortable clothing.
- 5) Establish a nightly going to bed ritual, which cues you to sleep.
- 6) Take a warm shower or bath before bed.
- 7) Try Progressive Muscle Relaxation – a strategy wherein a person tenses and releases various body parts, noting the difference between tension and relaxation.
- 8) Try the old, proverbial counting sheep and/or breaths.
- 9) Tell yourself as you fall asleep, that you will sleep deeply and well.
- 10) Imagine a calm scene in as much detail as you can.
- 11) Try listening to sounds of the ocean
- 12) Try different scents at bedside (e.g., lavender, chamomile)
- 13) Inspire sleep with a hot, non-caffeinated, herbal tea (e.g., catnip, chamomile) or warm milk. Sometimes a small snack can also help sleep. Do not have a large meal before bedtime.
- 14) Focus on calm, relaxing thoughts as you lay down to sleep. If worries or other important thoughts occur to you, mark them down and remind yourself that you will attend to them later.
- 15) Alter positions and use cushioning to achieve a comfortable state.
- 16) If you cannot sleep after 30 minutes (or if you wake and cannot return to sleep within 30 minutes) get up and engage in a boring activity until you feel sleepy again (no television since it is activating). Try again to sleep when you start to feel drowsy. The boring activity should be likely to put you to sleep, rather than something that might wake you up.
- 17) Reduce noise and/or obtain a source of low white noise to block unwanted sound disruption (e.g., a low-volume fan, static radio station).
- 18) Use a sleep eye mask and/or shut off all light sources (light disrupts sleep as well as night vision).
- 19) Maintain a comfortable temperature in the bedroom.
- 20) Do not watch the clock and worry about lost sleep. Turn the face of the clock away.

- 21) If you tend to worry while lying in bed, make an effort to think about those things in a structured way outside of bed. Before going to the bedroom, make a list of things to deal with the next day.
- 22) You may choose to limit other people/animals in the bed while you sleep. Animals can be especially disruptive if they take up space, move and awaken you, or need to be let out during the night. Partners who snore or move around can also disrupt your sleep.