

SLEEP HYGIENE

Check off the ones that you are NOT already doing. Recheck each week to make sure you're doing what you need to do. Do every one of these for two weeks. If you resolve the initial insomnia and midnight awakenings but are not refreshed during the day, start wind down (WD) 15 minutes earlier for a week. Add on another 15 min the next week if needed. Do this until you feel refreshed during the day. If you start struggling with sleep again, you've gone too far.

Cardinal rules to getting good sleep:

- Don't do anything in bed besides sleep (and sex). You want to associate your bed with restful sleep and nothing else.
- Don't be in bed for longer than you need to sleep. You will then be awake in bed and associate your bed with not sleeping.
- Get up at the same time (within a half hour) every day, no matter what time you went to sleep or how good the sleep was (except when you're sick or needing to make up for a big sleep deficit).

To help with initial insomnia:

- How much time do you need to sleep? (Err on the side of not quite enough.) ____ hours
- What time do you need to wake up? (Same time every day of the week.) ____ am/pm
- That gives you the time you want to shoot to fall asleep (but it is not a bedtime!). 30 minutes before that is your Wind Down (WD) time. ____ pm/am
- Wind Down: Get your bedtime tasks done before WD time. Choose a comfortable spot near your bed – either a couch, chair, or make a cozy corner with blankets and pillows. Dim the lights to allow for the release of melatonin which will make you feel tired (but not dim enough to hurt your eyes). Read a totally enjoyable book - something you look forward to, something reserved for WD time. Don't read on a backlit monitor. If you are reading on a device, make the background black, the writing white, and reduce the contrast. Read until you are about to fall asleep, then just roll into bed.
- Know and respect your sleep signs (nodding head, yawning, not following the story anymore). Don't try to push through – you can miss your window.
- Only go to bed when you're about to fall asleep. If you're not asleep in 15 min, get out of bed and wind down some more.

To help with midnight awakening:

- Be in bed only for the amount of time you need to sleep (you want to condense your sleep). Give your body a chance to get out of its old habit of waking up at night.
- Use the time you calculated above as an anti-bedtime and don't go to sleep before this time.
- If your bladder regularly wakes you up at night, avoid liquids for 2 hours before bed. Give your body time to get out of the habit of waking up at that time.
- If other things wake you up at night (pets, kids, the phone, etc.) – keep them out of the bedroom.

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Other guidelines:

- No caffeine after noon. Caffeine has a half-life of around 6 hours (6 hours later, 50% of the caffeine is still in your body. 8-10 hours later, 25% is still there).
- For some people sugary or spicy foods can disrupt sleep.
- In general, daily exercise helps sleep. Try to finish your exercise at least 6 hours before bed to give your body a chance to break down the adrenaline.
- Don't use monitors of any sort the hour (or at least 30 minutes) before WD. Blue wavelength light inhibits the release of melatonin and disrupts our circadian rhythm. For many people, being exposed to light in the middle of the night will restart their circadian rhythm so that their body thinks it's daytime and they cannot get back to sleep.
- If light or sound is waking you up, take care of it. White Noise app, earplugs, blackout curtains etc.
- Make sure you have a comfortable pillow, mattress, comforter, temperature, etc.
- No naps. Get your sleep at night.
- No snooze button. Why pull yourself out of deep sleep in order to have less refreshing sleep before you start your day? Get used to getting out of bed when your alarm wakes you up. If you turn your alarm off in your sleep, set one or several alarms far from your bed.
- No alcohol for several hours before bed. It may help you fall asleep but it disrupts your sleep later, pulling you out of sleep completely or to a lighter stage of sleep, leaving you unrefreshed the next day.
- Open your curtains to expose yourself to sunlight as soon as you get up.
- Studies show that what you believe about your sleep has a huge influence not just on your mood but on your sense of feeling rested.