

SLEEP HYGIENE TIPS

Beyond medication, there are several things you can do yourself to improve your sleep. Here are some methods to try and help you fall asleep more quickly, help you sleep more deeply, help you stay asleep, and ultimately help keep you healthy.

Following are tips for improving your sleep:

- Reduce your caffeine intake, especially in the afternoons
- Quit smoking
- Limit and/or omit alcohol consumption
- Limit naps to less than one hour, preferably less
- Don't stay in bed too long—spending time in bed without sleeping leads to more shallow sleep
- Adhere to a regular daily schedule including going to bed and getting up at the same time
- Maintain a regular exercise program. Be sure to complete exercise several hours before bedtime
- Make sure your bed is comfortable. You should have enough room to stretch and turn comfortably. Experiment with different levels of mattress firmness, foam or egg crate toppers, and pillows that provide more support
- Keep your room cool. The temperature of your bedroom also affects sleep. Most people sleep best in a slightly cool room (around 65° F or 18° C) with adequate ventilation. A bedroom that is too hot or too cold can interfere with quality sleep.
- Turn off your TV and Computer, many people use the television to fall asleep or relax at the end of the day. Not only does the light suppress melatonin production, but television can actually stimulate the mind, rather than relaxing it.
- Don't watch the clock – turn your alarm clock around so that it is not facing you
- Keep a note pad and pencil by your bed to write down any thoughts that may wake you up at night so you can put them to rest
- Refrain from taking a hot bath or shower right before bed; the body needs to cool a degree before getting into deep sleep
- Try listening to relaxing soft music or audio books instead or practicing relaxation exercises.

Visualizing a peaceful, restful place. Close your eyes and imagine a place or activity that is calming and peaceful for you. Concentrate on how relaxed this place or activity makes you feel.

It may take three to four weeks of trying these techniques before you begin to see an improvement in your sleep. During the first two weeks, your sleep may actually worsen before it improves, but improved sleep may lead to less pain intensity and improved mood.