



Sleep Hygiene

Healthy habits for a better night's rest

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Sleep hygiene refers to a set of healthy habits that support consistent, quality sleep. Research shows these strategies provide long-term solutions to sleep difficulties – and unlike sleeping pills, they address the root causes without risk of dependence.

Sleep Hygiene Tips

1 Get Regular

Go to bed and wake up at roughly the same time every day – even on weekends. This regular rhythm trains your body and makes you feel more refreshed.

2 Sleep When Sleepy

Only go to bed when you actually feel tired or sleepy, rather than spending too much time lying awake in bed.

3 Get Up & Try Again

If you can't sleep after about 20 minutes, get up and do something calm or boring until you feel sleepy, then return to bed. Keep lights dim – bright light signals your brain it's time to wake up.

4 Avoid Caffeine & Nicotine

Avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, cola, chocolate) and nicotine for at least 4–6 hours before bed. These are stimulants that interfere with your ability to fall asleep.

5 Avoid Alcohol

Avoid alcohol for at least 4–6 hours before bed. While it may seem relaxing at first, alcohol actually disrupts sleep quality throughout the night.

6 Bed Is for Sleeping

Reserve your bed for sleeping (and sex only), so your brain learns to associate bed with sleep – not TV, work, or scrolling on your phone.

7 No Naps

Avoid napping during the day if possible. If you must nap, keep it under one hour and before 3pm so it doesn't disrupt your night-time sleep.

8 Sleep Rituals

Develop calming bedtime rituals – gentle stretches, breathing exercises, or a cup of caffeine-free herbal tea can all signal to your body that sleep is near.



Sweet dreams come to those who sleep well

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Bathtime

A warm bath 1–2 hours before bed raises your body temperature, then as it drops again you'll feel naturally sleepy. Research confirms this connection.

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No Clock-Watching

Frequently checking the clock during the night can increase anxiety and reinforce thoughts like 'I'll never get to sleep.' Turn the clock away from view.

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Use a Sleep Diary

A sleep diary helps you track accurate facts about your sleep rather than assumptions. Use it for two weeks to spot patterns, then revisit two months later.

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Exercise

Regular exercise improves sleep quality. Finish vigorous exercise at least 4 hours before bedtime. Morning walks are a wonderful way to start the day refreshed!

13

Eat Right

A balanced diet supports better sleep. Avoid heavy meals close to bedtime – but a light snack can help if hunger is distracting. Warm milk contains tryptophan, a natural sleep aid.

14

The Right Space

Keep your bedroom cool, quiet, and dark. Use curtains or an eye mask to block early light, and earplugs if noise is an issue. Your sleep environment matters.

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Keep Daytime Routine

Even after a poor night, stick to your planned activities. Avoiding things because you're tired can reinforce insomnia – consistency is key.



Even owls know the value of a good night's sleep

When to Seek Professional Help

If sleep difficulties are persistent and affecting your quality of life, you don't need to tackle them alone. A GP, psychologist, or sleep specialist can help assess what's happening and work with you on a personalised plan – which may include Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I), one of the most effective treatments available.

Sleep is foundational to your health and happiness. Asking for help is a smart, caring thing to do for yourself.