

Sleep Hygiene

Sleep Facts

- The optimal amount of nightly sleep is **7-9 hours** (varies depending on individuals)
 - Mental and physical performance decreases substantially with less than 7 hours
- Many **health problems** have been associated with a lack of sleep
 - increased inflammation, depression, weight gain, heart disease and even cancer
- **Circadian rhythm** (“sleep/wake cycle”) describes the production of hormones throughout the entire day that regulates sleep and wakefulness. It requires **natural light** and **total darkness** to optimally function.
- Short **Naps** can be an effective way to reduce fatigue – the optimal time is **30min or less**
- “Sleeping in” **can’t** fully make up for lost sleep
- Sleep is not just for rest – while we sleep:
 - Tissues repair and heal
 - Memories are stored and organized
 - Hormones are produced (i.e. Growth hormone) that promote healing
 - Detoxification occurs

How to improve your sleep:

➤ **Get natural light and exercise during the day**

- Minimum 15min between 11am - 3pm daily
- Don’t use sunglasses immediately (if possible)
- Physical Exercise during the day helps with sleep
 - BUT avoid at least three hours before bed – overstimulating

➤ **Avoid sleep disruptors**

- Avoid drinking caffeine (pop, coffee, energy drinks and black tea) after 12 noon
- Alcohol prevents deep and restful sleep
- Remove WIFI routers and hubs from bedrooms.
- Turn all devices in “airplane mode” or power OFF
- Use your bed for **sleeping and intimacy only** - other activities create bad habits
- Avoid heavy snacks or meals before bed.
 - BUT don’t go to bed hungry - If you need a snack, keep it light
 - I.e. coconut yogurt and berries, avocado and rice crackers

➤ **Reduce blue light exposure in the evening**

- Remove, bright LED lights from the bedroom
- Nightshift for smart phones
- F.lux – free download for computers

➤ **Wind down before bedtime and be consistent**

- Take a minimum of 60 minutes to prepare for sleep
- Dim lights and turn off ALL screens and electronic devices 60 min before bed
- Establish a regular sleep pattern of going to bed and waking at the same time every day
- Ideas:
 - herbal tea – lavender, chamomile, lemonbalm, passionflower etc.
 - light stretching, deep breathing or peaceful meditation

➤ **Sleep in total darkness**

- our sleep/wake cycle is very sensitive to light. The hormone melatonin is secreted when we sleep in darkness and is responsible for starting sleep and reducing inflammation
- Turn off all lights and screens – dimming, turning, or covering digital clocks, and turning off phones and computers
- Invest in black-out blinds/curtains or an eye mask

➤ **Sleep in quiet and cool**

- Avoid sleeping with disruptive children, partners and pets
- Optimal sleep occurs when your core temperature decreases slightly
 - The only exception is **warm feet** – if you always have cold feet warm extra socks or slippers before bed

If you wake up in the middle of the night:

- Focus on your breath, slowly pulling air down into your bellow
- Listen to a peaceful meditation
- Keep a journal by the bed – try writing down your thoughts as a way of letting them go