

12 rules for better sleep hygiene

1. Sleep as much as needed to feel refreshed but not more. Excessively long times in bed can lead to fragmented and shallow sleep.
2. Have a regular wake-up time in the morning. This strengthens circadian cycling and leads to regular times of sleep onset.
3. Exercise daily to deepen sleep. Occasional exercise does not necessarily improve sleep the following night.
4. Use a fan to provide background 'white noise' if occasional loud noises disturb your sleep.
5. Keep room temperature a little cool. Too hot or too cold rooms disturb sleep.
6. Hunger may disturb sleep so a light snack may help. Try low fat, non-spicy snacks.
7. An occasional sleeping pill may be of some benefit, but their chronic use is ineffective in most insomniacs.
8. Use deep breathing and muscle relaxation exercises to divert the mind from anxious thoughts and list making, which interfere with falling asleep.
9. Avoid caffeine, including coffee, tea, pop and chocolate. Caffeine disturbs sleep even in those who feel it does not.
10. Avoid alcohol. It may help tense people fall asleep more easily, but the ensuing sleep is then fragmented.
11. If you feel angry and frustrated because you can't sleep, don't try harder and harder to fall asleep. Turn on the light and do something different (but no electronics or rigorous exercise!).
12. Reduce number of cigarettes you smoke; chronic smoking disturbs sleep.

Adapted from "11 Rules for Better Sleep Hygiene" in Peter Hauri's (1982) book, *Current Concepts: The Sleep Disorders*.