

Sleep Hygiene: Advice for Patients and their Caregivers

What is Sleep Hygiene?

Sleep hygiene is known as many different practices that people may use in order to have a normal, quality of nighttime sleep and full daytime alertness.

What is the importance?

Good sleep hygiene is important for everyone, from children through to adults. For some of us, we tend to stay up too late and get up too early. Good sleep hygiene routines promote healthy sleep and can prevent the development of sleep problems and disorders.

What activities interfere with sleep?

We often interrupt our sleep with electronic devices, drugs, chemicals and work. We overstimulate our brains too much with late night activities, and deprive our brains of important hormones like Melatonin which aids in sleep. It is important to help our bodies and minds to relax before bedtime.

Adults need sleep too!

Caregivers often feel the obligation to continue housework while children or youth are asleep; yet sleep-deprived caregivers often become irritable and irrational with a lack of sleep or not enough sleep. Make sure you also get a sufficient amount of sleep for yourself!

Alcohol, Nicotine, Caffeine and other Stimulants

Nicotine and caffeine are known as stimulants that excite the brain and interfere with sleep.

Although alcohol may act as a depressant at first, it later acts as a stimulant increasing the number of awakenings and decreasing the quality of sleep. As the alcohol induces sleep at first, your blood alcohol levels start to fall, causing a wake-up effect. It is therefore best to eliminate alcohol consumption 2-3 hours before going to bed. This timeline is suggested to be the same for nicotine and caffeine.

Eating spicy, heavy, or sugary foods may also affect your body's ability to fall asleep as the digestive system is still working to breakdown and eliminate these foods. If you are hungry, eating a light snack such as a banana is best.

THINK BEFORE YOU DRINK!

- Brewed Coffee contains 95 - 200 mg of caffeine
- Brewed Tea contains 40 - 120 mg of caffeine

- Monster Energy contains 160 mg of caffeine

Bedtime Routines

It is important that your bedtime routine starts at approximately the same time each night. Keeping this in mind, it is also important to wake up at the same time every day, even on the weekends!

Before bed some helpful tips may include:

- ✓ Taking a warm bath
- ✓ Listening to some light music
- ✓ Making sure your room is quiet
- ✓ Being at a comfortable temperature
- ✓ Reading something you enjoy

It is also important to not go to bed hungry, but it is just as important to not eat a heavy meal before bed either. Bedtime should be a positive and relaxing time without distractions.

Eliminating electronic distractions an hour before bed (such as television, computers, tablets, smartphones video games, etc.) can be helpful in winding down before bedtime. Many smartphones emit a 'blue light' that seems to be the most disruptive of all colors of light. "Blue light" is known to hinder melatonin production which in turn promotes sleep. The "blue light" emanating from these devices can actually cause havoc on our brains when they should be at their most restful.

Make a routine for yourself such as brushing your teeth, getting pajamas on, setting your clothes out for the next day, setting your alarm, doing some light "non-electronic" reading, then turn the lights off and close your eyes.

Tips and Tricks

- Avoid napping during the day, if needed, 20-minute rest periods are best.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, spicy and heavy foods 4-6 hours before bedtime.
- Use comfortable bedding.
- Ensure the room is at a good temperature and well ventilated.
- Block out all distracting noise, If some background noise is necessary, a radio on low is suggested as it is less engaging than television.
- Limit all electronic devices to one hour before bedtime. Make sure you give your brain a rest from "blue light."
- Establish a pre-sleep ritual or bedtime routine.
- Exercise is good, but only in morning to mid-afternoon; avoid vigorous exercise too close to bedtime.
- Practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation or yoga.

- Turn your bedroom into a sleeping environment.
- Do not be a nighttime clock watcher; get out of bed if you cannot fall asleep within 20-30 minutes
- Have consistent bedtimes and awakening times even on the weekend.

Sleep Resources

- Kingston General Hospital: Sleep Clinics
- Canadian Sleep Society
- Canadian Pediatric Society
- National Sleep Foundation
- Sleep For Kids
- Better Nights, Better Days

©Hotel Dieu Hospital
PS# 5217 – 2015-12-1