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Sleep Hygiene

What Can I Do to Promote Sound Sleep?

- Get out of bed at the same time every morning, even on days off from work.
- Try to go to bed at the same time each night.
- If you cannot fall asleep or stay asleep, get out of bed. Do a quiet activity outside of the bedroom. Go back to bed when you feel drowsy. Repeat this process if you do not fall asleep within 20-30 minutes.
- Use your bedroom only for sleep and sex.
- Avoid napping during the daytime, unless instructed by your physician.
- Minimize light, noise, and temperature extremes in the bedroom. A comfortable bed in a dark, quiet room is the best setting for a good night's sleep.
- Do not exercise within three hours of bedtime. Regular exercise helps people sleep better; the benefits of exercise on sleep, however, depend on the time of day it is undertaken and on your overall fitness level. Exercise close to bedtime can disrupt sleep. Exercise in the morning is not likely to effect sleep at night.
- Do not drink caffeine after noontime. Caffeine stimulates the brain and interferes with sleep. Although moderate daytime use of caffeine usually does not interfere with sleep at night, heavy or regular use during the day can lead to withdrawal symptoms and to sleep problems at night.
- Do not drink alcohol within four to six hours of bedtime. One of the effects of alcohol is a slowing of the brain activity. When taken at bedtime, alcohol may help induce sleep at first, but will disrupt sleep later in the night.
- Do not eat a full meal shortly before bedtime. Heavy meals close to bedtime interfere with the ability to fall asleep. A light snack at bedtime, however, can promote sleep. Milk and other dairy products, which contain the natural sleep promoting substance tryptophan, are especially good as bedtime snacks.
- Stop smoking. Nicotine is a stimulating drug that interferes with sleep, and nicotine withdrawal can also disrupt sleep throughout the night.
- Engage in a relaxing activity before bed. Stress that stems from common life situations often contributes to sleep problems. A relaxing activity can help relieve tension and encourage sleep. Talking with a trusted friend or colleague to discuss troubling issues can be helpful. Relaxation exercises, meditation, biofeedback, and hypnosis are sometimes beneficial in controlling sleep problems.