

The Do's and Don'ts of Good Sleep Hygiene

Conservative Measures to Develop Good Sleep Habits

Do:

- Go to bed at the same time each day.
- Get up from bed at the same time each day – the most important determinate of a healthy circadian rhythm is consistent wake time – you are doing very well if you don't need an alarm.
- Get regular exercise each day. There is evidence that regular exercise improves restful sleep.
- Get regular exposure to outdoor or bright lights, especially in the morning.
- Keep the temperature in your bedroom comfortable.
- Keep the bedroom quiet when sleeping.
- Keep the bedroom dark enough to facilitate sleep.
- Use your bed only for sleep and sex.
- Warm bath or shower before bed.
- Keep your feet and hands warm. Wear warm socks and/or mittens or gloves to bed if needed.

Don't:

- Exercise or engage in stimulating activity just before going to bed.
- Have exposure to bright lights or computer screens in the evening.
- Have caffeine past 10 am (coffee, many teas, chocolate, sodas, etc.) – in fact caffeine has > 24 hour neurologic effect meaning that even a morning coffee may cause arousals in sleep.
- Read, watch television or use electronic devices in bed.
- Use alcohol to help you sleep – in fact alcohol before bed causes arousals later in the night.
- Go to bed too hungry (causes insomnia) or too full (can cause acid reflux).
- Drink too much water before bed – causes wake-ups to go to the bathroom.
- Take over-the-counter sleeping pills. Diphenhydramine (an ingredient commonly found in over-the-counter sleep meds) commonly causes morning grogginess, and even occasionally sleep walking (a common reason for administrative separation from Naval service).
- Take daytime naps – if you have problems initiating or maintaining sleep.
- Command yourself to go to sleep as this can cause performance anxiety leading to further wakefulness.
- Look frequently at your watch or alarm clock – very common cause of insomnia.

If you lie in bed awake for more than 20-30 minutes, get up, go to a different room or different part of the bedroom and participate in a quiet activity (e.g. non-excitabile reading or television). Return to bed when you feel sleepy. Do this as many times during the night as needed.

