

Sleep Hygiene Handout

Understanding sleep hygiene

Many people struggle with sleep problems due to poor sleep hygiene, which includes habits and environmental factors that affect sleep quality. Waking up tired, feeling sleepy throughout the day, or struggling to fall asleep despite spending enough time in bed are common signs of poor sleep hygiene.

Sleep hygiene refers to healthy sleep habits that help regulate the body's natural sleep-wake cycle, promoting a better night's sleep. Simple actions like reading quietly, drinking warm milk, or taking short naps can help individuals find relaxing ways to wind down before bed.

Not getting enough sleep can increase stress levels and lead to cognitive, emotional, and physical health issues (Williams et al., 2013). Poor sleep hygiene can also cause daytime sleepiness, mood disturbances, and reduced productivity, impacting daily life.

Why sleep matters

Quality sleep plays a critical role in overall health and well-being. Here's why getting the right amount of sleep is essential:

- Cognitive function and productivity: Sleep enhances memory, learning, and concentration, reducing errors and improving decision-making.
 - Emotional and mental health: Poor sleep increases stress, irritability, and the risk of anxiety or depression.
 - Physical health: Restful sleep supports immune function, weight management, and heart health while reducing the risk of chronic diseases.
 - Energy and alertness: A better night's sleep improves energy levels, prevents daytime sleepiness, and reduces the risk of accidents.
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Common sleep challenges

Despite its importance, many people face barriers to quality sleep. Here are some common reasons why sleep problems happen:

Irregular sleep schedules

Most adults need 7–8 hours of sleep, but inconsistent sleep patterns can disrupt the body's natural rhythm. Sticking to a set bedtime and wake-up time improves sleep quality.

Screen time and stimulants

Excessive screen use before bed can interfere with melatonin production, making it harder to feel sleepy. Consuming caffeine or nicotine 4–6 hours before bedtime can also disrupt sleep.

Poor sleep environment

A noisy, bright, or uncomfortable room can prevent restful sleep. A cool, dark, and quiet bedroom promotes relaxation and uninterrupted sleep.

Diet and lifestyle factors

Heavy meals, alcohol, and a lack of physical activity can negatively affect sleep. Engaging in light exercise and making mindful dietary choices contribute to better sleep.

The 10-3-2-1-0 sleep rule

Following this simple rule can help improve sleep habits:

- 10 hours before bed: No caffeine.
 - 3 hours before bed: Avoid eating heavy meals or drinking alcohol.
 - 2 hours before bed: Stop working or engaging in stressful activities.
 - 1 hour before bed: Turn off screens and find relaxing activities.
 - 0 times: Avoid hitting the snooze button in the morning.
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Essential sleep hygiene habits

- ✓ Maintain a consistent sleep schedule: Go to bed and wake up at the same time daily, even on weekends.
 - ✓ Create a comfortable sleep environment: Use blackout curtains, white noise machines, and a comfortable mattress.
 - ✓ Develop a relaxing pre-bed routine: Engage in reading quietly, listening to soft music, or taking a warm bath.
 - ✓ Avoid stimulants before bed: No caffeine, nicotine, or alcohol close to bedtime.
 - ✓ Limit naps: Short naps (20–30 minutes) can be beneficial, but long naps can disrupt nighttime sleep.
 - ✓ Use your bed for sleep only: Avoid working or using screens in bed to strengthen the brain's association between bed and sleep.
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Additional notes

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, May 15). *About sleep*. https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/about/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/about_sleep/sleep_hygiene.html

Williams, P. G., Cribbet, M. R., Rau, H. K., Gunn, H. E., & Czajkowski, L. A. (2013). The effects of poor sleep on cognitive, affective, and physiological responses to a laboratory stressor. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 46(1), 40–51. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12160-013-9482-x>