

## **Sleep Hygiene:**

# **Better Sleep Habits – Better Sleep**

- 1.** Avoid watching TV, eating, and discussing emotional issues in bed. The bed should be used for sleep and sex only. If not, we can associate the bed with other activities and it often becomes difficult to fall asleep.
- 2.** Minimize noise, light, and temperature extremes during sleep with ear plugs, window blinds, or an electric blanket or air conditioner. Even the slightest nighttime noises or luminescent lights can disrupt the quality of your sleep. Try to keep your bedroom at a comfortable temperature -- not too hot (above 75 degrees) or too cold (below 54 degrees). Cooler is often better than warmer.
- 3.** Try not to drink fluids after 8 p.m. This may reduce awakenings due to urination.
- 4.** Avoid naps, but if you do nap, make it no more than about 25 minutes about eight hours after you awake. But if you have problems falling asleep, then no naps for you.
- 5.** Do not expose yourself to bright light if you need to get up at night. Use a dim night-light instead.
- 6.** Nicotine is a stimulant and should be avoided particularly near bedtime and upon night awakenings. Having a smoke before bed, although it may feel relaxing, is actually putting a stimulant into your bloodstream.
- 7.** Caffeine is also a stimulant and is present in coffee (100-200 mg), soda (50-75 mg), tea (50-75 mg), and various over-the-counter medications. Caffeine should be discontinued at least four to six hours before bedtime. If you consume large amounts of caffeine and you cut yourself off too quickly, beware; you may get headaches that could keep you awake.
- 8.** Although alcohol is a depressant and may help you fall asleep, the subsequent metabolism that clears it from your body when you are sleeping causes a withdrawal syndrome. The depressant effect alters sleep patterns and prevents you from the normal cycling through different sleep phases.
- 9.** A light snack may be sleep-inducing, but a heavy meal too close to bedtime interferes with sleep. Stay away from protein and stick to carbohydrates or dairy products. Milk contains the amino acid L-tryptophan, which has been shown in research to help people go to sleep. So milk and cookies or crackers (without chocolate) may be useful and taste good as well.
- 10.** Do not exercise vigorously within about 2 hours of bedtime, especially if you are the type of person who is aroused by exercise. If this is the case, it may be best to exercise in the morning or afternoon (preferably an aerobic workout, like running or walking).
- 11.** Does your pet sleep with you? This, too, may cause arousals from either allergies or their movements in the bed. Thus, your cat or dog may be better off on the floor than on your sheets.
- 12.** Ensure your bedroom is aired out and smells good, especially if you frequently have unpleasant dreams. A good-smelling air freshener may be helpful.