Sleep Hygiene

December 11, 2009 | Sleep Disorders [1], Alcohol Abuse [2], Sleep Wake Transition [3], Tipsheets [4]
By Rajnish Mago, MD [5]

Simple but powerful suggestions to get a better night's sleep.

In following these suggestions, you may need to keep doing them for some time before you see their full benefit. Also, be consistent: try to follow these suggestions as regularly as possible.

Goal: To train the brain to feel sleepy and to feel awake at regular times
• Stick to approximately the same times to wake up and to go to bed. Don't vary this schedule much on weekends either.
• Wake up at a fixed time every day—regardless of how long you slept during the night. This is hard to do but will be really helpful by making you sleep better and better over the next few days.
• If you haven't slept well and are tired, the temptation to nap is understandable. BUT—if you nap during the day, your sleep at night will be worse. This cycle will continue. Rest as much as you need to during the day, but do not lie down or nap.
Goal: To develop a strong mental association between your bedroom (or bed) and sleep
• Use the bedroom only for sleep and sex. Don't read or watch TV in bed.
• Get into bed only when you are sleepy.
• If you are unable to fall asleep, get up and go into another room.
• Restrict the time spent in bed to the time you were able to actually sleep. Thus, you won't be lying awake in bed. Then gradually increase the time you spend in bed if you are able to sleep for slightly longer periods.
Goal: To avoid being over-stimulated at bedtime
• Avoid caffeine after about 3 pm.
• Stop doing active mental work at least 1 hour before you intend to lie down to sleep.
• Try to do some exercise every day because it can help you to sleep better. If you are tired, you may have to start with doing only a little bit—whatever you can do. Don't exercise in the evening, however, because this may stimulate you and worsen sleep.
• Make a soothing bedtime "ritual" that you follow every day before you lie down to sleep. This may include a warm bath or shower, some light reading, listening to soothing music, etc.
• To avoid being too full at bedtime, eat dinner at least 2 to 3 hours before bedtime, but take a light snack if needed so that you are not hungry either.
• Consider learning a relaxation exercise and practicing it during the day and when you lie down to sleep.
• Don't use alcohol as a way to calm yourself and to promote sleep. While it may help you to fall asleep, the sleep will be restless and disturbed.
Goal: To create an environment conducive to sleep
• Your bedroom should be dark, so close the blinds.
• Your bedroom should be quiet; if other measures are not enough, consider using foam earplugs.
• Your bedroom should be cool but not cold. A temperature of about 65°F is ideal for most people.
• Your mattress should be relatively firm (not sagging). Your pillow should be comfortable based on your preference of the degree of firmness.
Click here for Tipsheet.

References:
Image © Photos.com

Source URL: http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/sleep-disorders/sleep-hygiene

Links:

[1] http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/sleep-disorders
[2] http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/alcohol-abuse
[3] http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/sleep-wake-transition
[4] http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/tipsheets
[5] http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/authors/rajnish-mago-md