

Top 10 tips for improving sleep hygiene

1. **Increase activity** – one of the benefits of exercise is improving sleep quality and quantity. Just be careful to avoid intense activity right before bed as this can be too energizing.
2. **Avoid caffeine too close to bedtime** – caffeine is found in tea, coffee, energy drinks and chocolate. Limit up to 8 hours prior to bedtime.
3. **Avoid alcohol close to bedtime** – although it may feel like alcohol can help you fall asleep faster, it actually leads to a poor quality of sleep.
4. **Avoid going to bed too hungry or too full** – if necessary, give yourself permission to have a light snack before bed but be careful to avoid greasy and spicy foods that may lead to heartburn.
5. **Avoid screens within an hour of bedtime** – screens including TV, computer and phone emit a type of light that tricks our brain into thinking that it is daytime. This affects the release of important sleep hormones.
6. **Unwind before bed** – reduce stress by reading a book, having a bath or listening to relaxing music.
7. **Avoid taking naps** – for some people, napping can lead to sleep disturbance. If you do nap, keep it to 30min or less.
8. **Follow the same routine** – aim to keep roughly the same sleep/wake times each day, even on the weekends.
9. **Make your bedroom comfortable and relaxing** – keep your bedroom uncluttered and at a moderate temperature.
10. **Avoid getting stressed if you can't sleep** – even when we do everything right, some nights it may be more difficult to fall asleep than others. Turn the clock away from view and trust that your body will make up for the occasional poor sleep. Try deep breathing or visualization exercises while resting in bed.

Still having problems? Talk to your doctor or mental health professional. Sometimes sleep problems can be a sign of a sleep disorder or another problem.