



**Sleep Disorders Unit**  
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**HINTS TO IMPROVE YOUR  
SLEEP HYGIENE**

**'Sleep hygiene' is a term used to describe your sleep habits. Below are a few suggestions which some people have found to be useful in improving their sleep hygiene, enabling them to feel more alert during the day.**

1. Have medical problems which might interfere with sleep such as asthma, heartburn, angina, arthritis or pain under optimal control.
2. Reduce sedatives (alcohol and some medications) which can impair quality deep sleep. You should seek advice from your doctor before stopping 'prescribed' medications.
3. Consider timing/dosage of medications. Diuretics, for example, if taken close to bedtime may disrupt night-time sleep due to increased toilet trips. Check with your GP the possibility of taking such medications earlier in the day.
4. Reduce stimulants (coffee, chocolate, cola, energy drinks & cigarettes) which prevent quality deep sleep.
5. Reduce factors which might arouse you from sleep - bright or flashing lights, external noise, uncomfortable bed or extremes of temperature. A cool, dark environment is most conducive to sleep. Ear-plugs may be necessary in a noisy environment
6. Get plenty of early morning sunlight. This will help regulate your sleep-wake cycle. Increased exposure to daylight in the afternoon, up to about 3 hours before bedtime, may also help to reset circadian rhythms.
7. Keep a regular schedule of retiring and arising each day.
8. Avoid daytime naps. Try to consolidate your sleep into one block at night.
9. Have a hot shower or bath before bed. Our body temperature peaks in the daytime and falls during sleep. We tend to fall asleep as our body temperature begins to fall.
10. Attempt to exercise daily (ideally to a level which causes you to perspire) to help promote deep sleep. Time your exercise at least 4-6 hours before bedtime. Exercise raises body temperature, so avoid exercise close to bedtime as this will prevent you from falling asleep.
11. Avoid large meals for 2-3 hours before bedtime. A drink high in carbohydrates (e.g. Ovaltine, which has malt) with milk (which contains tryptophan) may help induce sleep, whereas high-protein foods may induce wakefulness.
12. Have a relaxing ritual such as reading before bed. Cease looking at bright monitors (TV, computer, ipad or mobile telephones) at least 30-60 minutes before bedtime. The blue light emitted from the screen inhibits your sleep-promoting hormones.
13. Go to bed only for rest, sleep or intimacy. Avoid reminiscing about the day's events, watching TV or doing paper-work in bed.
14. Hide the bedroom clock.
15. If you cannot fall asleep after 20-30 minutes, get out of bed and do something different to change your thoughts from sleep. Learn to relax out of bed.

**Please note, not all of these hints are relevant to all patients.  
(e.g. exercising daily to a level which causes perspiration)  
Choose and adapt the hints which are most appropriate for your situation.**