



Tips to Promote a Good Night's Sleep

Good sleep habits—also called sleep hygiene—can help you get a good night's sleep. Here are some tips from NorthShore Sleep Medicine and sleep specialist Dr. Lisa Shives:

1. Try to go to sleep at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning. Try not to take naps during the day because naps may make you less sleepy at night.
2. Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol late in the day. Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants and can keep you from falling asleep. Alcohol can cause waking in the night and interferes with sleep quality. Sometimes it is necessary to eliminate caffeine completely, but you should do this gradually in order to avoid withdrawal.
3. Get regular exercise. Try not to exercise close to bedtime because it may stimulate you and raise your core body temperature and make it hard to fall asleep. Experts suggest not exercising for at least three to four hours before the time you go to sleep.
4. Don't eat a heavy meal late in the day. A light snack before bedtime, however, may help you sleep.
5. Try taking a hot bath (with water as hot as you can stand it) for 20-30 minutes immediately before retiring to bed.
6. Make your sleeping place comfortable. Be sure that it is dark, quiet, and not too warm or too cold. If light is a problem, try a sleeping mask. If noise is a problem, try earplugs, a fan or a "white noise" machine to cover up the sounds.
7. Follow a routine to help you relax before sleep. Read a calming book or listen to soothing music.
8. Avoid using your bed for anything other than sleep or sex.
9. Only go to bed when you are truly sleepy.
10. If you can't fall asleep and don't feel drowsy after lying in bed for 15 minutes, get up and read or do something that is not overly stimulating until you feel sleepy. Do not watch TV or use a computer.
11. If you find yourself lying awake worrying about things, try making a to-do list or keep a journal where you chronicle your worries and concerns. This may help you to not focus on those concerns during the night. Set aside time each day, preferably in the early evening to write these things down.

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