

Sleep: Problems & Tips

Common Problems

- × **Sleeping whenever, wherever.** Sleeping places other than your bed and at times other than bedtime weakens your brain's link between sleep and your bed.
- × **Eating large meals or drinking before bed.** This may cause waking to use the bathroom. Eating right before bed also increases your risk for heartburn due to undigested food.
- × **Caffeine or Alcohol.** This can make it harder to fall asleep and may cause you to wake throughout the night.
- × **Sleeping with the lights or TV on.** Your brain needs the hint that it is night which means also making your environment dark.
- × **Doing other things in bed that aren't sleep.** This includes studying, homework, reading, or listening to music on your bed.
- × **Being hard on yourself if you can't sleep.** This only makes your thoughts more negative and makes it harder to fall asleep.

Sleep Hygiene Tips

- **Keep a sleep schedule.** Go to bed at the same time every night and wake up at the same time every morning, even on the weekends.
- **Avoid naps.** If you do take a nap, limit it to 30-45 minutes in the early afternoon.
- **Beds are for sleeping.** Make your bedroom a calm place including making your room dark and cool. Cooler temperatures can help you sleep better at night.
- **Create a bedtime routine.** Make the 30-60 minutes before bedtime a quiet and relaxing time. This can include a warm bath, light snack, or a few minutes of reading.
- **Limit screen time.** Turn off screens 1-2 hours before bedtime. The light (even with the blue light filter) can give your brain the cue that it is time to be awake.
- **Avoid caffeine.** Avoid eating or drinking products with caffeine in the late afternoon and evening. These include caffeinated sodas, coffee, tea, and chocolate.
- **Get sunlight.** Spend time outside, especially first thing in the morning. This can help keep your body's internal clock on track.
- **Exercise earlier in the day.**
- **If you can't sleep, get out of bed.** Don't stay awake in bed for more than 20-30 minutes. Get out of bed and do something boring. Go back to into bed when sleepy.