

The Importance of Sleep Hygiene

Sleep is necessary for our bodies to rebuild itself and our mind needs time to process all that it has learned. Adults need an average of 8 hours of sleep but most adults get only about 6 hours and lose a full night of good and needed rest. A person can know if they are getting enough sleep if they wake up on their own. Early morning awakening on your own is a good sign but needing an alarm clock or someone to wake you may be a sign of not getting enough sleep.

Sleep problems are the most common problem a doctor will hear. Almost 50% of adults will have some kind of sleep problem and 90% of the patients with depression report having sleep problems¹. Unfortunately, our body is affected if we do not have good sleep. Shortened sleep increases the risk of diabetes, obesity and increased cholesterol and lipids. Insomnia is also connected to many chronic conditions such as arthritis, asthma and even menopause². Of course, the chronic condition has to be treated before the doctor can help the insomnia. As pointed out above, depression also is a disorder that you may see problems sleeping. Depression also has to be treated for a patient to return to a normal sleep pattern.

Sleep hygiene is a term that describes all of the habits, actions, and steps that lead to good sleep. Some things in your life you can't control such as work schedules or child care but good hygiene can be achieved if you work on some habits you **can** control. Below is a small list of actions you can start right away that may help you get a better sleep.

1. **Don't eat or drink large a lot before bedtime.**
2. **Avoid nicotine, caffeine and alcohol in the evening.**
3. **Exercise regularly.**
4. **Avoid daytime naps.**
5. **Have a comfortable mattress and pillow.**
6. **Do the same things each night to tell your body it's time to slow down.**
7. **Go to bed and get up at about the same time every day, even on the weekends.**
8. **Make your bedroom cool, dark, quiet and comfortable.**
9. **Go to bed when you're tired and turn out the lights.**
10. **Avoid watching TV**
11. **Listen to soothing music**
12. **Do relaxation techniques**
13. **If you don't fall asleep within 15 to 20 minutes, get up and do something else.**

1 Richardson G, The Physical and Fiscal Impact of Sleep Disorders, Journal of Managed care Medicine. 2011: Vol 12, No.3:16-21

2 Richardson G, The Physical and Fiscal Impact of Sleep Disorders, Journal of Managed care Medicine. 2011: Vol 12, No.3:16-21

7/27/11