

Helpful 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 and thereby feel more alert while awake.

1. Have medical problems which might interfere with sleep such as asthma, heart burn, angina, arthritis, pain or breathlessness under optimal control.
2. Reduce stimulants (tea, coffee, chocolate, cigarettes) which prevent quality deep sleep.
3. Reduce sedatives (alcohol and some medications) which can impair ones ability to have quality deep sleep. You should seek advice from your doctor before stopping "prescribed" medications.
4. Reduce factors which might arouse you from sleep: external noise, uncomfortable bed or extremes of temperature. Ear plugs are OK to use.
5. Get plenty of morning sunlight. This will help regulate your sleep-wake cycle.
6. Attempt to exercise (ideally to a level which causes you to perspire) daily at least 4 - 6 hours before bed time.
7. 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.
8. Avoid large meals before bed time. A drink high in carbohydrates (Ovaltine which has malt) with milk (which contains tryptophan) may help induce sleep, whereas high protein foods may induce wakefulness.
9. Get out of bed at regular fixed time each day.
10. Go to bed only for rest/sleep/intimacy. Avoid reminiscing about the days events or watching TV. Have a ritual such as reading fiction before bed.
11. Hide bed room clock.
12. Avoid napping during the day time.
13. If you cannot fall asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed and do some thing different to change your thoughts from sleep.

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