



## 12 RULES TO BETTER SLEEP HYGIENE

1. **Sleep as much -- at night -- as needed to feel refreshed and healthy during the following day, but not more. Decreasing time in bed a bit (down to the total amount of time you might get if you add possible bits and pieces of sleep together) seems to make sleep more solid; excessively long times in bed seem related to fragmented and shallow sleep. Aim for a standard number of hours of sleep every single night, and more or less during the same time block.**
2. **A regular wake-up time in the morning seems to strengthen circadian cycling and to finally lead to regular times of waking up in the morning on your own.**
3. **A steady daily amount of exercise probably deepens sleep over the long run, but occasional one-shot exercise does not directly influence sleep during the following night.**
4. **Give yourself a wind-down time each day, some time after dinner but well before bedtime. Use this time to tie up the day's loose ends, organize tomorrow, and perhaps even do some strategic thinking about the year after tomorrow. It is better to do this when you are awake and alert than to wait until the lights are out and your head has hit the pillow! Anxiety about things you can do nothing about at night interferes with sleep. So, give yourself a scheduled, routine 30-60 minutes to do this end-of-the-day tying up.**
5. **Create a structure to your day (even week-ends) that requires you to do certain things at certain times. Having something to do, at a standard time in the morning, is particularly important.**
6. **Hunger may disturb sleep. Aim for the tried and true three meals a day. Don't skip breakfast. As well, a light bedtime snack (especially warm milk or a protein bar) seems to help many individuals sleep.**
7. **An occasional sleeping pill may be of some benefit, but the constant use of a class of sleeping pills called benzodiazepines or benzodiazepine-like (for instance Ambien, Lunesta, Klonpin, Ativan) is ineffective at most and detrimental in some insomniacs. Far better to understand why your body is not sleeping, and to correct the root cause.**
8. **Caffeine in the evening disturbs sleep, even in persons who do not feel it does. Sometimes even early-in-the-day has the same effect. And there are many hidden sources of caffeine! Please ask for a listing of these hidden sources.**
9. **Alcohol helps tense people to fall asleep fast, but the ensuing sleep is then fragmented. Alcohol suppresses REM (dreaming) sleep as long as it is in the body.**
10. **Rather than trying harder and harder to fall asleep during a poor night, doing something else may help the individual who feels angry, frustrated, or tense about being unable to sleep.**
11. **Try not to switch on the light in the middle of the night. For some people, this may actually re-set the circadian clock! If you can't get back to sleep in about 15 minutes, get out of bed and do something else -- but definitely with very dim light should light be needed at all.**
12. **And the last of the dozen -- get as much light as you can during the daytime, and as much darkness you can during the nighttime.**