

# SLEEP HYGIENE

Sleep hygiene is a variety of different practices that are necessary to have normal, quality nighttime sleep and full daytime alertness. The most important sleep hygiene measure is to maintain a regular wake and sleep pattern seven days a week. It is also important to spend an appropriate amount of time in bed, not too little, or too excessive. This may vary by individual; for example, if someone has a problem with daytime sleepiness, they should spend a minimum of eight hours in bed, if they have difficulty sleeping at night, they should limit themselves to seven hours in bed in order to keep the sleep pattern consolidated. In addition, good sleep hygiene practices include the following:

- **Avoid napping during the day.** It can disturb the normal pattern of sleep and wakefulness.
- **Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol too close to bedtime.** While alcohol is well known to speed the onset of sleep, it disrupts sleep in the second half as the body begins to metabolize the alcohol, causing arousal.
- **Exercise can promote good sleep.** Vigorous exercise should be taken in the morning or late afternoon. A relaxing exercise, like yoga, can be practiced before bed to help initiate a restful night's sleep.
- **Food can be disruptive right before sleep.** Stay away from large meals close to bedtime. Also dietary changes can cause sleep problems, if someone is struggling with a sleep problem, it's not a good time to start experimenting with spicy dishes. And, remember, chocolate has caffeine.
- **Ensure adequate exposure to natural light.** This is particularly important for older people who may not venture outside as frequently as children and adults. Light exposure helps maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle.
- **Establish a regular relaxing bedtime routine.** Try to avoid emotionally upsetting conversations and activities before trying to go to sleep.
- **Associate your bed with sleep.** It's not a good idea to use your bed to watch TV, do work, listen to music, or read.
- **Make sure that the sleep environment is pleasant and relaxing.** The bed should be comfortable, the room should not be too hot or cold, or too bright.