

HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS

Tips For A Restful Sleep



The following tips will help you to have a better night's sleep.

1. Try to relax before bedtime; take a walk or read a newspaper; just do something which is not stressful.
2. Do your paperwork or other work-related activities early in the evening.
3. Cut down on smoking and drinking alcohol at least two hours before bedtime.
4. Don't socialize with friends with whom you are likely to argue in the evening. Nighttime arguments are like poison to an insomniac.
5. Think of places you fell asleep easily and try to copy those places; set your room up the same way.
6. Check the medicines you are taking to see that they aren't nervous system stimulants.
7. Make sure your bedroom is well-ventilated but not too cold.
8. Don't use too many or too few blankets.
9. Don't tuck your sheets in too tight at the bottom of the bed; your feet should feel free and unrestricted.
10. Your mattress should not sag.
11. Try eating snacks high in calcium and protein before retiring; small amounts of cheese and nuts contain Tryptophan, an amino acid which promotes sleep.
12. Your pajamas or nightgown should be comfortable, not too tight.
13. Use a pillow that suits you, soft or firm, whichever you prefer; or not at all, if that's what you prefer.
14. If you like a soft light on while you sleep, have one on.
15. Herbal teas such as camomile and valerian induce sleep.

Adapted by QualityBooks.com



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Circadian Rhythms



Helpful Resources

Related Websites

- www.sleepapnea.org
- www.aasmnet.org
- www.sleepnet.com

Books/Audio Tapes

- Complete Guide to Natural Sleep by Dian Dincin Buchman
- Hypnosis to Help You Sleep Deeply by Janet I. Decker (audio)
- No More Sleepless Nights by Peter Hauri
- The Promise of Sleep: A Pioneer in Sleep Medicine Explores the Vital Connection between Health, Happiness, and a Good Night's Sleep by William C. Dement & Christopher Vaughan
- Snoring and Sleep Apnea: Sleep Well, Feel Better by Ralph A. Pascualy & Sally Soest

Note: Audio & Book versions of these resources are available at your public library or local bookstore.

Important Notice: Information in this flyer is for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. For further questions or help with specific problems or personal concerns contact Health Resources Employee Assistance Program. Health Resources EAP is not responsible for the content of the materials provided on the Internet.

What are Circadian Rhythms?

Circadian rhythms are the natural responses to daily light and dark transitions. They are environmental time cues used by organisms to effectively function. Circadian rhythms are evident everywhere in nature. In plants, petals open and close as the sun rises and sets. Animals in the wild follow a daily cycle of awakening, hunting, eating, and resting. The daily circadian rhythms of humans, which controls all hormonal activities and metabolism can easily become disrupted.

Prolonged disrupted circadian rhythms can lead to:

- Insomnia
- Eating Disorders
- Jet Lag
- Sexual Dysfunction
- Mood Disorders

Four possible solutions to Circadian Rhythm Disruption:

1. **Light Therapy** - First known as an effective tool for Seasonal Affective Disorder, people are now turning to light therapy as a possible solution. Through the use of special light boxes, many people have found that light therapy can help to reset a person's body clock when sleep cycles have been disrupted by too much work, partying or jet lag.
2. **Sauna Therapy** - Native Americans and Northern Europeans have long used saunas to relieve tension, relieve stiffness and help the body's natural healing processes that can be lost as a result of circadian rhythm disruption.
3. **Meditation** - The process of meditation is often a way to help eliminate stressors that have disrupted the body clock. Meditation is often more effective than a nap.
4. **Exercise** - Exercise is considered the most natural approach for maintaining health and maximizing the benefits of innate circadian rhythms.

adapted from the Biologic Rhythms & Sleeplessness website.



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Night Shift Concerns



More than 22 million American workers perform shift work. Working different shifts other than the regular 9 to 5 can create greater fatigue, digestive problems and irritability for employees. The key to solving some of these problems is to make sleep a priority! There are several steps a shift worker can take to successfully fall asleep and stay asleep.

The National Sleep Foundation recommends the following:

- Go to sleep as soon as possible after work.
- Ask family and friends to help create a quiet and peaceful setting during your sleep time.
- Have family members wear headphones to listen to music or watch TV.
- Ban vacuuming, dish washing, and noisy games during your sleep time.
- Put a "Do Not Disturb" sign on the front door so that delivery people and friends will not knock or ring the doorbell.
- Schedule household repairs for after your sleep time.

Other Tips for Successful Shuteye:

Bedtime Rituals

- Take a warm bath or soak in a hot tub.
- Lower the room temperature (a cool environment improves sleep).
- Don't "activate" your brain by balancing a checkbook, reading a thriller, or doing other stressful activities.
- Darken the bedroom and bathroom.

Sound

- Wear ear plugs.
- Use a white noise machine, like a fan, to block other noises.
- Install carpeting and drapes to absorb sound.
- Unplug the telephone.

Food

- Avoid caffeine less than five hours before bedtime.
- Don't stop for a drink after work; although at first you may feel relaxed, alcohol disturbs sleep.
- Eat a light snack before bedtime. Don't go to bed too full or too hungry.

Exercise

- If you exercise at the workplace, do so at least three hours before you plan on going to bed. Otherwise, exercise after you sleep. Because exercise is alerting and raises the body temperature, it should not be done too close to bedtime.



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Family & Social Life



Shiftworkers commonly cite difficulty maintaining friendships, keeping the kids quiet during the day, accomplishing household duties, and finding time for a satisfying marriage. Partners of shiftworkers, meanwhile, may not like the feeling of being left alone at night.

Here are some tips for minimizing family problems:

- Designate a certain time each week to relax and talk with your partner (even if the time changes weekly).
- Plan a “family day” once a month.
- Use your VCR to tape TV shows the whole family enjoys, and watch them together later.
- Install a home security system, or get a dog, if your partner is fearful at night.
- Keep a neighbor’s telephone number with you, in case you can’t get through to your home in an emergency.
- Develop a circle of friends who understand your work schedule and are willing to be flexible in order to spend time with you.
- Bring up problems early and resolve them - before they threaten relationships.

Dealing with Irritability

Shiftwork schedules often leave employees feeling sleep-deprived, which in turn can cause you to be irritable around your family. This is very common. If you become irritable, make sure your family understands that it’s because you’re tired and not because you’re angry with them. This is especially important with young children.

Recovery Days

After a run of night shifts, there is a need for shiftworkers to catch up on their sleep and relax. Consider scheduling family events after you’ve felt well-rested.

Communication

With any of the above-mentioned tips, communication is the key for success. By communicating often and clearly, family and friends will understand what you need to manage a shiftwork schedule. Letting friends and family members know your schedule helps them make plans that can include you. Post a calendar in a highly visible spot and mark your shift schedule as soon as it is assigned. Be sure to note your recovery days (your first day off after several nights shifts) so that everyone knows it isn’t a regular day off.

Adapted from the Working Nights Health & Safety Guide



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