

What is involved in sleep hygiene

1. Consider reducing caffeine, and nicotine: these are stimulants that can delay sleep onset and impair sleep quality.
2. Some people use alcohol to help them get to sleep because it relaxes them, but it may cause awakenings and reduce sleep quality later in the sleep.
3. Go to bed when sleepy.
4. Avoid napping during the day. Napping reduces the "sleep pressure" that builds up during the day to the point where a threshold is reached and we are ready to sleep. If a nap is needed it should be before 1500 hrs otherwise it will interfere with sleep.
5. Regular daily exercise can help improve sleep, but should be avoided close to a sleep period.
6. Ensure that the bedtime environment is comfortable and conducive to sleep. The bed should be comfortable, the temperature not too hot or cold, the room dark, and noise minimised; being too hot or cold, noise, and light can disrupt sleep.
7. Avoid looking at a computer screen in the hours before bed as this may delay sleep onset -the light reduces the production of melatonin making the brain think it is morning and it is time to awake and get up (lit clocks may also do this).
8. If not asleep within 15-20 minutes, get out of bed and wait until drowsy. Bed should be associated with sleep or intimacy.
9. Go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each day. Also try and have a slow-down routine before bed.