

Sleep Hygiene Habits

The boring half of sleep advice. Worth doing anyway.

Most people who sleep badly know roughly what they "should" be doing. The point of this sheet is not new information; it is a fixed list to check yourself against, week by week, with the research behind each habit. Tick the ones you already do. Pick one or two of the rest to add this week. Sleep improves slowly; do not expect tonight to be different.

In the morning

- ☐ 10 to 30 minutes of daylight in your eyes within an hour of waking; it anchors the body clock for the night to come. *(Wright et al., 2013)*
- ☐ Wake at the same time every day, weekends included; a fixed wake time steadies the whole rhythm. *(Buysse, 2014)*
- ☐ Some movement during the day; regular exercise deepens sleep, just keep it out of the last three hours. *(Kredlow et al., 2015)*

Through the day

- ☐ No caffeine after noon; it stays active in the body for eight to ten hours. *(Drake et al., 2013)*
- ☐ No naps after 3 p.m., and keep any nap under 20 minutes. *(Lovato and Lack, 2010)*
- ☐ Give worry a daytime slot; write the problem down to deal with then, so it is not waiting at bedtime.

As evening comes

- ☐ Let the light drop, or shift to warm lamps; low evening light tells the brain to begin making melatonin. *(Foster and Kreitzman, 2017; LeGates et al., 2014)*
- ☐ Dim indoor lights and use warm colour temperatures at night. *(Chang et al., 2015)*
- ☐ No alcohol within three hours of bed; it may relax you first, then fragments the second half of the night.
- ☐ Light supper only; no heavy meal or sugar in the last hour, and ease off fluids so you are not up in the night.
- ☐ No vigorous exercise late; it raises core temperature and delays sleep.

The 90 minutes before bed

- ☐ Screens off, or on night mode with a blue-light filter (400 to 500 nm). *(van der Lely et al., 2015; Chang et al., 2015)*
- ☐ A hot bath or shower one to two hours before bed; the cool-down afterward brings sleep on. *(Haghighat et al., 2019)*
- ☐ The same calm wind-down routine most nights (shower, stretch, read, journal). *(Buysse, 2014)*
- ☐ Three lines of gratitude; it settles the nervous system before sleep. *(Digdon and Koble, 2011)*
- ☐ Avoid emotionally activating content and hard problem-solving; no doomscrolling.
- ☐ If it suits you, and ideally with your doctor: melatonin, or magnesium, glycine, or theanine; herbal aids such as valerian or chamomile have lighter evidence. *(Bruni et al., 2014; Sarris and Byrne, 2011)*

In bed

- ☐ Go to bed only when sleepy, not just because it is late.
- ☐ If you are awake more than 20 minutes, get up and do something quiet in dim light until drowsy. (*Bootzin, 1972/2014*)
- ☐ Keep the bed for sleep and intimacy only; not work, scrolling, or TV. (*Bootzin, 1972/2014; Morin et al., 2006*)
- ☐ If your mind races, let the thoughts be there without fighting them; notice them, and let them pass. (*Dalrymple et al., 2020*)

Your bedroom (set it once)

- ☐ Cool, 16 to 19 degrees C (60 to 67 F); the body drops its temperature to fall asleep. (*Irish et al., 2015*)
- ☐ Fully dark, blackout curtains or an eye mask; even the router LED can dent deep sleep. (*Chellappa et al., 2013*)
- ☐ Fully quiet, or masked with a fan, white noise, or earplugs.
- ☐ Comfortable, temperature-regulating bedding.
- ☐ A calming scent such as lavender can modestly help. (*Lillehei et al., 2015*)

Which one or two will you start with this week?

Naming the specific habit makes it more likely to happen than a general intention.

The research behind these habits

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