10 Steps to Improving Sleep Hygiene

What is Sleep Hygiene?
Sleep hygiene is a term used to describe practices of daily living that promotes good sleep and daytime function. Improvements in sleep hygiene practices have been shown to provide long-term solutions for sleep difficulties.

Why is Sleep Important?
Adequate sleep is necessary to:
- Fight off infection
- Support sugar metabolism → prevent diabetes
- Work effectively and safety

1. Bed is for Sleeping
Try not and use your bed for anything but sleep so that your body comes to associate bed with sleep. The best way to accomplish this is to cut out watching TV, eating, reading, working, or using electronic while lying in bed; otherwise your body will not learn this connection.

2. Reduce Stress
Try to avoid emotionally upsetting conversations and activities before trying to go to sleep. Don't dwell on, or bring your problems to bed.

3. Limit Naps
It is best to avoid taking naps during the day to make sure that you are tired at bedtime. If you can't make it through the day without a nap, make sure it is for less than an hour and before 3pm.

4. Exercise
Regular exercise (3-4 times per week) is a good idea to help with good sleep. Vigorous exercise should be taken in the morning or late afternoon. A relaxing exercise, like yoga, can be done before bed to help initiate a restful night's sleep.
5. Comfortable Environment
Make sure your bed and bedroom are comfortable for sleeping. Cooler rooms with enough blankets to stay warm is best, and have curtains or earplugs to avoid outside distraction if needed.

6. Avoid Alcohol
Avoid alcohol consumption 4-6 hours before going to bed. Many people believe alcohol is relaxing and helps them to get sleep, but it actually interrupts with the quality of sleep.

7. Avoid Caffeine and Nicotine
Like alcohol, it is best to avoid caffeine (i.e. coffee, tea, soda) or nicotine (i.e. cigarettes, chewing tobacco) at least 4.6 hours before going to bed. These substances act as stimulants and interfere with the ability to fall sleep.

8. Consistent Sleep and Wake Times
One of the best tips is to maintain a regular wake and sleep pattern seven days a week. This regular rhythm will make you feel better and give your body something to work from.

9. Develop Sleep Rituals
Develop your own sleep rituals consisting of things that remind your body that it is time for sleep (i.e. taking a warm bath or doing breathing exercises 15 minutes before bed each night).

10. Eat Right
Stay away from large meals close to bedtime. Some people find that a very empty stomach at bedtime is distracting, so it can be useful to have a light snack, but a very heavy meal can also interrupt sleep. Some people recommend a warm glass of milk, which contains tryptophan, which acts as a natural sleep inducer.