

FOURTEEN RULES FOR BETTER SLEEP HYGIENE

For people whose only medical complaint is, “I can’t sleep well” or “I can’t get to sleep easily,” taking sleeping preparations may do more harm than good. Most authorities on sleep recommend against use of sedative drugs by these people for the following reasons:

- 1) Sedatives modify nervous system activity during sleep: for example, they may reduce the normal period of dreaming. After taking sedatives for a while and then stopping, many people report they have sleep-disrupting dreams, which cause them to wake up feeling tired even after a full night’s sleep.
- 2) The human body develops tolerance to sedatives after their repeated use. After a while, you have to take more and more sedatives to make you feel sleepy.
- 3) A person can become psychologically dependent on sleeping preparations; if you are convinced that’s the only way you can get a good night’s sleep, you won’t be able to go to sleep without a drug.

NON-DRUG AIDS TO SLEEP:

1. Go to bed and rise about the same time every day. Establishing a schedule helps regulate your body’s inner clock. Also try to establish a “sleep routine” by following the same bedtime preparations each night, thereby telling yourself it’s bedtime before you get into bed.
2. Sleep as much as needed, to feel refreshed and healthy during the following day, but not more. Curtailing the time in bed seems to solidify sleep; excessively long times in bed seem related to fragmented and shallow sleep.
3. Make sure your sleeping conditions, including your bed, are comfortable as possible. If you are sharing a bed with a snoring, cover-stealing, or restless partner, make separate, temporary sleeping arrangements until you reestablish a satisfactory sleeping pattern.
4. Wear loose fitting night clothes. The more comfortable you are, the better you will sleep.
5. Keep your bedroom dark. If street lights shine in your room or if you must sleep during the day, buy room-darkening shades or blinds.
6. Although excessively warm rooms disturb sleep, there is no evidence that an excessively cold room solidifies sleep.
7. Keep your bedroom as quiet as possible. If you can’t block outside noise, “cover” it with familiar inside noise such as the steady hum of a fan or other appliance.
8. Avoid taking alcohol drink, including beer or wine, before bedtime. When Alcohol wears off during the night, you may experience period of wakefulness.
9. The chronic use of tobacco disturbs sleep.
10. Avoid too much mental stimulation during the hour or so prior to bedtime. Read a “light” novel or watch a relaxing TV program; don’t finish office work or discuss family finance with your spouse, for example.
11. Avoid using your bedroom for working or watching television. Learn to associate that room with sleep.
12. If you can’t sleep, get up and pursue some relaxing activity, such as reading or knitting, until you feel sleepy, do not lie in bed worrying about getting to sleep.
13. Avoid all caffeine-containing beverages after lunch. Remember that many soft drinks, as well as coffee and tea, contain caffeine.
14. Try to get some exercise each day. Regular walks, bicycle rides, or whatever exercise you enjoy may help you sleep.