



Sleep Handouts

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What is sleep hygiene?

Sleep hygiene is a variety of different practices that are necessary to have restful, quality nighttime sleep and full daytime alertness.

Why is it important to practice good sleep hygiene?

Just like breathing – sleep is an essential and basic human need!

Poor sleep habits are among the most common problems encountered in our society and the effects of sleep deprivation can be quite detrimental. Some of the consequences:

In the short term:

- **Decreased Performance and Alertness:** Sleep deprivation induces significant reductions in performance and alertness. Reducing your nighttime sleep by as little as one and a half hours for just one night could result in a reduction of daytime alertness by as much as 32%.
- **Memory and Cognitive Impairment:** Decreased alertness and excessive daytime sleepiness impair your memory and your cognitive ability -- your ability to think and process information. Sleep deprivation reduces attention, alertness, vigilance, and decision-making ability by 50 percent; communication skills by 30 percent; and memory by 20 percent. It also contributes to depression, irritability, mood disorders and the ability to reason.
- **Stress Relationships:** Disruption of a bed partner's sleep due to a sleep disorder may cause significant problems for the relationship (for example, separate bedrooms, conflicts, moodiness, etc.).
- **Poor Quality of Life:** You might, for example, be unable to participate in certain activities that require sustained attention, like going to the movies, seeing your child in a school play, or watching a favorite TV show.
- **Occupational Injury:** Excessive sleepiness also contributes to a greater than twofold higher risk of sustaining an occupational injury.
- **Automobile Injury:** The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates conservatively that each year drowsy driving is responsible for at least 100,000 automobile crashes, 71,000 injuries, and 1,550 fatalities.

In the long term, the clinical consequences of untreated sleep disorders are large indeed, including:

- High blood pressure
- Heart attack, Heart failure and Stroke
- Obesity and increased risk for diabetes

- Depressed immune functioning
- Hormone dysregulation: essential for regulating growth/repair and wakefulness/alertness.
- Exacerbation of physical, mental or emotional problems:
 - anxiety and depression
 - Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)

**Considerable amounts of sleep research suggest that over one-third of Americans consistently exhibit symptoms of sleep deprivation; however, less than 10% of those are identified by primary-care doctors. Most people are in denial about sleep deprivation and by the time these people seek help or acknowledge sleep deprivation, problems are likely severe!

Typical Signs of Insufficient Sleep

- Daytime sleepiness . . . duh!?!
 - Be careful: Most people are in denial about sleep deprivation! Lack of alertness, nodding off or daydreaming on tasks is often blamed on boring or monotonous tasks – when really it is sleep deprivation.
- Habitually sleep less time than you ‘think or feel’ that you need
- Unplanned naps
- Sleep longer on weekends or days off
- Symptoms disappear with longer periods of sleep
- Medical, psychiatric or sleep disorder(s) do not better account for symptoms

Typical Causes

- Insufficient sleep
- Insomnia: Difficulty falling asleep, difficulty staying asleep, difficulty waking up in the morning (i.e. I’m a bear in the morning!)
 - Contributing factors include: Fear, worry, frustration, disturbing thoughts (nightmares, night terrors), depression/anxiety and behaviors incompatible with “natural sleep” patterns and cycles
- Medical/Sleep disorders (Injury/disease, Medications, Sleep Apnea, etc.)

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Most Common Sleep Disorders

Insomnia is a significant lack of high-quality sleep. It can be short-term or chronic. Insomnia may be caused by stress, a change in time zones or sleep schedule, poor bedtime habits, or an underlying medical or psychiatric condition (e.g. Depression, anxiety).

Sleep apnea is a common disorder that can be very serious, and even life-threatening. In sleep apnea, your breathing stops or gets very shallow while you are sleeping. Each pause in breathing typically lasts 10 to 20 seconds or more. These pauses can occur 20 to 30 times or more an hour. Primary symptom is persistent, loud snoring – typically never noticed by the sufferer!

The most common type of sleep apnea is **obstructive sleep apnea**. During sleep, enough air cannot flow into your lungs through your mouth and nose, even though you try to breathe. When this happens, the amount of oxygen in your blood may drop. Normal breaths then start again with a loud snort or choking sound.

Restless legs syndrome (RLS) is a sensory disorder causing an almost irresistible urge to move the legs. The urge to move the legs is usually due to uncomfortable, tingly, or creeping sensations that occur when at rest. Movement eases the feelings, but only for a while.

Narcolepsy is a disorder that causes a person to have difficulty staying awake. Narcolepsy can cause a person to suddenly fall asleep during the day.

These “sleep attacks” occur even after getting enough sleep at night. The unusual sleep pattern that people with narcolepsy have can affect their schooling, work, and social life. Falling asleep during activities like walking, driving, cooking, or talking can have dangerous results, both professionally and personally.

An important note: You can address most common sleep problems through lifestyle changes and improved sleep hygiene. However, it is important to see your doctor or a sleep specialist for a diagnosis if your sleep does not improve or if your partner observes continuous sleep disturbances. A doctor who specializes in sleep problems is most skilled in diagnosing and treating sleep disorders. Sometimes sleep specialists work out of a sleep center; others are independent.

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Where to Begin: Better Sleep

1) Determine your sleep needs

- Create a sleep log (helps awareness of behaviors that may help/hurt sleep)
 - Keep track of bed and wake times
 - Keep track also of diet and daily activities that might contribute to sleep disturbance
- If change is desired, utilize 30-minute change increments (bed and wake times) and allow 2-3 weeks for new pattern to set
 - Work backwards with change increments – begin by establishing a necessary wake time and adjust bed time accordingly
- After the allotted time, reassess – then make further adjustments if necessary

2) Establishing Rhythm and Regularity are essential!

- We are creatures of habit by nature - designed to consistently establish a healthy equilibrium automatically and systematically
- Work with, not against, your built-in biological clocks (circadian rhythms – naturally modulate our sleep and wakefulness)
 - This means, listen to your body! Even if you're in the middle of a incredibly fantastic game of Halo or you want to catch up on the latest from The Hills – if you're having trouble keeping your eyes open – go to sleep!!
- MYTH: We can “make up” for lost sleep by sleeping more on weekends or days off
 - In fact, we can sleep “too much.” Reestablishing a regular and consistent sleep schedule is the **ONLY** way to resolve ‘sleep debt.’
 - After the body has naturally equilibrated, more bed-time is not ‘restful’ and may actually evoke sleepiness-like symptoms.
- NAPS: Only good for moderate recovery from sleep deprivation. Research shows that naps are most productive if they are: a) Planned, b) **ONLY** 30 minutes long (power nap!) or **ONLY** 120 minutes long (no longer!)

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10 Tips for a Good Night

1) **Create a comfortable sleep environment**

- Bed, pillow, sheets, room temperature, humidity, air circulation, darkness and allergies all play a role
- Noise is an especially critical factor: A noise machine (not T.V.!) can assist with either noise reduction or noise cancellation
- The Bed: should be for Sleep and Sex ONLY! Let your mind associate the bed with sleeping, relaxing, and pleasure.

2) **Don't go to bed stuffed or starving**

- Allow at least 2 hours after a meal for bed time
- A small snack before bed is OK – a small portion of high, complex-carbohydrate or protein is best (too much sugar can increase energy, hindering sleep)
- Limit fluid intake to minimize nighttime interruptions

3) **Get some exercise!**

- Fatiguing the body during the day stimulates a reparative response, leading to more restful sleep
- Do not exercise too close to bed time – the body needs time to “come down” from the adrenalin/endorphin rush produced by exercise

4) **Put away the alcohol. . .**

- Although alcohol is a sedative and can make you feel sleepy – it can severely obstruct/prevent essential sleep cycles that provide the ‘restful’ component during sleep
- Alcohol also increases frequency and intensity of sleeping and breathing disorders (i.e. sleep apnea, snoring, allergic responses, etc.)

5) **Stop smoking**

- Sleep is often disrupted by the body's perceived need for nicotine! A craving for nicotine may not be recognizable at night – often translating into “late-night munchies.”

6) **Go Decaf! (. . .at least after 12 Noon. . .)**

- For those of us who are “caffeine junkies”, allow at least 5-7 hours to process the last beverage before your planned bed time.
- Don't be fooled into believing that the ONLY way you can sleep is to have a Coke right before bed. . . Although you may fall asleep – it will likely NOT be restful!

7) **Check and monitor all medications**

- Be certain to investigate effects of all drugs, including herbal supplements!

8) **Leave worries at the door. . .**

- Schedule a designated “worry time” to get as stressed out as you would like – leaving enough time to relax before sleep.
- Schedule the next day - only! Providing yourself with a basic structure for the next day can eliminate moment-to-moment worries about things like breakfast, what to wear, kids' lunch, important meetings, etc.
- Relaxation methods: meditation, breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation (PMR), biofeedback; more information provided below.

9) **Establish a pre-sleep routine or ritual**

- Create and maintain consistent pre-sleep behaviors: bathroom time, prayer, reading (not in bed!), talk to your Mom, etc. This helps to train, prepare and signal the body for sleep.

10) **Do not try to fall asleep. . . Just allow it to happen!**

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The Path to Sleep Health: Relaxation

Stress Management

If you are not sleeping because you are worrying about something that is happening in your life, the best thing to do is to do something about the problem. Perhaps you can't remove the problem but you can do some constructive things like:

- During the day, talk to someone about the problem. Seek support from friends or a professional counselor.
- Most of the thinking and worrying that we do in bed needs to be done - it just does not need to be done in bed. If you are lying in bed and not being able to get off to sleep because you are worrying, sit up and write about the problem. Keep a journal of your thoughts and feelings which you write in your journal when you feel the urge.
- Try an imagery of storing your worries away for a night. This works very effectively when used in conjunction with some physical relaxation exercises.
- Devote some time during the day (5-60 minutes) for thinking and worrying. This should end at least a couple of hours before going to bed. Then, when the thoughts come when you are in bed, say gently: "Stop, I thought about this today. I will think about it again tomorrow. Now is the time to sleep".

Relaxation: A Guide

There are many approaches to learning to relax. None is "right" for everyone - it is more a matter of finding an approach that makes sense and works for you. Learning to relax muscle groups physically, learning mental relaxation, meditation, yoga, prayer, biofeedback - all are possible approaches. As our body is not disconnected from our mind and our emotions, it is possible to use any of these starting points to benefit our entire being.

*Like exercising in order to get fit, doing relaxation exercises once will not make you "fit": learning to relax takes time and practice in order for you to become proficient.

Learning to Breathe

When we become **STRESSED** for any reason, our bodies activate the natural, genetic "fight-or-flight" response leading to very shallow and quick breathing patterns. Most often we do not acknowledge this type of breathing – but we feel it as anxiety. Once we think about our anxiety, we often become more anxious thinking about how anxious we are?!? **Deep Breathing** breaks this cycle by intentionally slowing our breaths, providing more oxygen to our bodies, and energizing and rejuvenating every organ and cell in our bodies. Lie on your back.

Deep Breathing

1. **Priming:** Slowly relax your body, starting with your feet and moving through every part of your body until you have reached -- and relaxed -- your face and scalp. Wiggling **ONLY** your toes for 10 seconds is a great first step.
2. **Noticing:** Slowly begin to inhale through your nose - first filling your lower belly, then your stomach area, and then your chest and the top of your lungs almost up to your shoulders. Hold for a second or two, and then begin to exhale through your mouth until you are completely empty. Continue this breathing for a few minutes – paying close attention to how the breath fills your lungs and how tense spots on your body begin to decompress.
3. **Intention:** After a few minutes, begin to inhale through your nose while slowly counting from 0 to 5. Once you reach 5, hold your breath and count backwards slowly from 5 to 0. Once you reach 0, exhale through your mouth while counting slowly from 0 to 5.
4. **Letting Go:** What you will find is that your breathing will naturally become slower and more regular. Remember, don't force your breathing; it's not a contest!
5. **Accepting:** After a while, imagine that you are resting on a warm, gentle ocean. The sun is shining peacefully on your body. Imagine that you rise on the gentle swells of the water as you inhale, and that you slowly descend as you exhale.
6. Continue this relaxing breathing as long as you wish (hopefully until you fall asleep).

Note: The results of this breathing technique are immediate. You will feel your shoulders and arms relaxing. Your chest will feel less constricted and you will feel less stress and tension.

Practice this breathing technique on a daily basis so that it becomes a natural routine for you and helps to induce natural sleep.

Visualize Something Peaceful

Just lie there with your eyes closed and imagine you're in your very favorite, most peaceful place. It may be on a sunny beach, swinging in a hammock in the mountains or your back yard, or all alone in a cave in the Himalayas.

Wherever it is, imagine you are there. You can see your surroundings, hear the peaceful sounds, smell the fragrance of the flowers, and feel the warmth of the sun or whatever sensations are there. Just relax and enjoy it -- and drift off to sleep.

Once you've found a place that's especially peaceful and effective, you'll find that the more you use it, the more you can count on it to help you relax and get to sleep. Its comfort and familiarity will make it more and more effective.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Try the following relaxation exercise before you get into bed:

1. Lay on your back on the bed/floor with your feet slightly apart, your hands by your sides, and your palms turned upward.
2. Close your eyes and concentrate on every part of your body.
3. Remember to breathe! (See above)
4. Begin at the top of your head and work your way down to your toes.
5. Start by feeling your forehead tense, then your eyes, then your jaw, finally your entire face – almost like your ‘scrunching your face’ from sour lemons.
6. Squeeze and tense each individual muscle group, hold for 5 seconds, and then release. Try to tense **ONLY** one select muscle group at a time – this can be tricky to start, but you will soon master this ability.
7. Move down from your head, to your neck, through your shoulders and arms. Continue down through the trunk of your body, down through your thighs, into your calves, through the arch of your feet, and ending at the tip of your toes. Wiggle
8. Give attention to each area of your body from the top of your head, down through the trunk of your body, down along your legs, and ending at the tip of your toes. Wiggling **ONLY** your toes for 10 seconds is a great final step.
9. As you become more aware of your body parts, concentrate on your breathing and let all your worry and stress dissipate from your mind and body as you **tense** and **release**.
10. Through practice, this exercise will tell your body and mind that it is okay to settle down, leaving behind thoughts of worry, fear, and stress. Performing this exercise regularly, you will notice that it becomes much easier to reach a state of complete relaxation – almost at the mere thought!

Drink Herbal Teas

If a glass of warm milk just does not do it for you - or you avoid dairy products - try a cup of hot chamomile, catnip, anise or fennel tea. All contain natural ingredients which will help you sleep. Most health food stores (Whole Foods is exceptional for this) will also have special blends of herb tea designed to soothe you and help you get to sleep.

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Resources for Sleep Health

National Sleep Foundation

Web site: www.sleepfoundation.org

National Center on Sleep Disorders Research – Information Center

Web site: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsdr

SleepNet.com

Web site: <http://www.sleepnet.com/>

Sleep Centers in Houston:

**Most major Hospitals or Medical Centers have sleep disorder clinics or programs that can be contacted: [The Methodist Hospital Sleep Disorders Center](#) - (713) 441-7854

Sleep research studies are also available depending on specific criterion:

Web site: <http://www.houstonsleepcenter.com/>

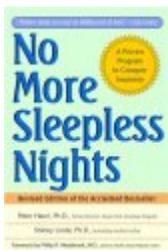
Websites that offer free and downloadable recorded relaxation exercises:

http://www.umw.edu/cas/psychservices/resources/relaxation_exercises_down11.php

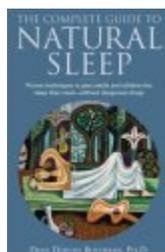
<http://www.shuteye.com/sleep-solutions/relaxation-techniques.aspx>

http://caps.studentaffairs.duke.edu/self_help/relaxation.html

Also, try these books:



No More Sleepless Nights
by Peter Hauri



Complete Guide to Natural Sleep
by Dian Dincin Buchman

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