

# Sleep Hygiene

By: Dr Ken Mueller BSc DC

Certain factors may negatively impact on one's ability to achieve a restful sleep. Among them may be prescription drugs, external stressors, lack of consistent physical activity and poor habits leading to diminished ability to either get to sleep, or stay there.

As a first line intervention try utilizing the following checklist of factors associated with insomnia. If you feel that you may be affected by any of the following, attempt to utilize the follow up advice to determine if it is helpful in offering you a more restful sleep. Remember that every person is unique and not every piece of advice will be of equal use to every individual, and as such please consider these to be general guidelines, not laws of sleep hygiene.

- ) Are you retiring at a consistent hour? If not, attempt to normalize a regular bedtime as much as possible within your daily demands. Normalizing that bedtime can be very useful in aiding you to create a regular sleep schedule.
- ) Do you consume alcohol, caffeinated beverages, or nicotine before bed? These substances can interfere with your ability to achieve restful sleep, and as such you should avoid them in the evening before bed. More than a pack of cigarettes per day can interfere with sleep (along with the obvious other health risks. Caffeine can stay in your system for up to 9 hours.
- ) Do you consume excessive quantities of food or drink before bed? Attempt to increase the number of hours between eating and sleeping if possible, and attempt to make your evening meal a smaller one. Excessive intake of fluids can cause one to awaken in order to void the bladder.
- ) Are you taking any new prescription drugs, or over-the-counter (OTC) sleep aids? Abuse of OTC sleep aids can create serious sleep abnormalities. Advice on the label will discourage prolonged use. Prescription medications or OTC medications which may contain caffeine can interrupt sleep. Consult your doctor or pharmacist if you have concerns regarding any of your medications.
- ) Do you exercise heavily before sleep? Vigorous exercise late in the evening can cause difficulties in relaxing for sleep. As such, attempt to move vigorous work outs to an earlier hour of the day.

- ) Do you nap during the day? If so try avoiding it and determine if it aids your night time sleep patterns.
- ) Are you distressed by mental concerns? If so try keeping a pad of paper near your bed on which to write. Write your concerns on the pad and attempt to leave them for the evening so that you can deal with them the next day after a restful night of sleep. Depression can negatively affect your ability to sleep. Do you have someone with whom to discuss your concerns, and or someone helping you to manage your stress?
- ) If you are unable to sleep after 30 minutes of trying, get up and have a light snack or listen to some peaceful music before returning to bed.
- ) Is your bed comfortable with a firm mattress? If not it may be time to consider shopping for a new mattress.
- ) Is your room dark and quiet, and do you have a restless partner sharing your bed? Try and make an ideal sleeping situation. If your partner is bothersome, consider a trial of sleeping in separate beds or develop strategies to calm your partner's sleep.
- ) If you suffer from sleep apnea, weight loss can have a very positive effect on your ability to achieve restful sleep.
- ) Regular cardiovascular exercise can aid you in sleep, stress management, and general health status. If you are considering undergoing a new fitness regime speak with your managing health care practitioner before starting.

If you are still having trouble sleeping after considering the previous list, discuss other available options with your managing health care practitioner.



[WWW.DRKENMUELLER.COM](http://WWW.DRKENMUELLER.COM)