



SLEEP HYGIENE

Having a good sleep/wake routine is called sleep hygiene and is essential for our body and mind. Sleep helps us to process information from the day, creates a routine, helps boost the immune system and helps you to heal.

According to Oxford University Scientists, we are getting between 1 and 2 hours less sleep than we did 60 years ago, every night! Part of this is due to a lack of routine. We often have a morning routine to get to work on time but often don't have the same for bed.

We set routines at bedtime for babies, we help them to understand when bedtime is coming.

A bath, a warm drink, a story, no screens. We lose this in adult life.



TORUS
WELLBEING CLINIC

Signs and Symptoms of Poor Sleep Hygiene

Have you ever lay awake late into the early hours? Your brain whirring away and unable to switch off? Wondering about how long you've been awake or how many hours until the alarm?

- Thinking about trivial things or ruminating on the day
- Worrying about things that you did in the past
- Concerned about the future
- Feeling sick and tired
- Dropping off in the day
- Lack of motivation
- Feeling of lethargy

The biggest reason we lie awake, unable to nod off is thinking about what we have done in the day and what we need to do tomorrow. It is very easy to create problems that don't really exist, thinking about the worst scenario - this is called Catastrophising

Causes of Poor Sleep Hygiene

Sleep disturbance can be caused by a number of things, rather than one single factor, but the following may contribute

- Shift working
- Stress/Anxiety/or depression
- Gaming
- Long periods spent on blue light screens
- Napping during the day
- Alcohol or other substances

Top Tips For Optimum Sleep Hygiene

Creating a routine that you stick to is the most important thing, it won't happen overnight (pardon the pun), it will take time but don't give up!

- Get your steps in before 6:30pm - Taking part in an exercise class or working out at home late into the evening causes the body to find it more difficult to switch off. The heart has been working hard, your brain too and we've pumped adrenalin into our system. It needs time to 'come back down' from all that effort. If you want to exercise, choose some gentle stretching, yoga or Qi Gong.
- No tech 90 minutes before bed - The problem with computer games, computers, phone screens, T.V.? They all have a light that makes it more difficult for melatonin to be produced (the sleep hormone) so, switch the screen on your phone to dark in the evening and turn the brightness down if you're struggling to put it down.
- Choose a relaxing T.V. programme - Watching a Horror film or an emotive programme about politics probably isn't going to help you to relax. It'll heighten your heart rate and your blood pressure: not helpful for sleep.

Top Tips For Optimum Sleep Hygiene

- Try meditation or listen to some relaxing music - Relaxing music or just simply sitting in silence, focusing on your breath in and out can help calm the system. Just a few minutes will help to switch on your 'rest and digest' state.
- Deep, conscious breathing - Deep breathing switches on your Parasympathetic Nervous System: this lowers your heart rate and blood pressure; aids digestion; boosts the immune system and helps you to rest. Sit in a comfortable position allowing your shoulders and tummy to soften, take a breath in through your nose for 3-4 seconds, the tummy and chest will expand, release the breath out through the mouth for around 6-8 seconds. Repeat at least 3 times.
- Avoid caffeine - even tea contains caffeine late in the day. If you can, try to avoid coffee after 2pm, perhaps switch to decaf or drink water and herbal teas.
- Keep your bedroom cool - Lots of people have a bath to relax and unwind but it's not the actual bath that helps you to get to sleep? It is actually the drop in body temperature you experience when you leave the warm bath. This drop helps the sleep hormones to be released making it easier to fall asleep. Also having your room a little cooler will make it easier for you to fall asleep. Maybe open a window or switch the heating down.
- Setting Boundaries - We are so easy to reach right now. It is easy to answer a text late in the evening, to check your work e-mails on your phone or mindlessly scroll through Social Media. Scrolling through Social Media may seem like a way to switch off but quite often we are exposed to events in the lives of others, political views and news stories; we may get caught up in some events.
- All of the things above cause you to have an emotional response, causing you to heighten your emotions at a time when you should be winding down. So set your boundaries. Say that after 8pm, unless it is an emergency, I won't be answering e-mails or text messages, you're not being rude, you're saying that you are protecting your emotional space, your home life and ultimately, protecting your sleep.
- Keep a notebook by your bed to write down anything you feel pops into your mind that you 'need' to do or remember: Brain Dump.

Further Support

If you would like to find out more about how meditation can help with sleep, get in touch with us at www.toruswellbeingclinic.co.uk or connect with us on social media.



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