

## Sleep Hygiene Recommendations

- **Timing:** Make sure to give yourself enough time for sleep. Most people prefer 7–9 hours of sleep each night and require only about six hours to meet their body's physiological needs. If your schedule permits, try to get to bed by 10pm. Minimally, try to be asleep by midnight. Most importantly, do not resist the urge to sleep. If the sun has set and you feel ready to sleep, don't avoid or ward off sleep until later in the evening. Go for it and don't look back. If you can't fall asleep or if you wake in the middle of the night and can't fall back asleep, get out of bed after an hour of trying. Once out of bed, keep the lights dim, or off and practice meditation or do some light reading to wind back down.
- **Food:** Avoid eating meals after 7pm and make sure that your dinner isn't too heavy. Other considerations include: spiciness (avoid spicy food before bed), alcohol (try to go without until your sleep patterns are where you would like them), caffeine and other stimulants (it's best to avoid them entirely and, if that isn't an option, have no caffeine, including chocolate, after noon) and marijuana (avoid sativa varieties, or better yet, all marijuana while experiencing sleep problems).
- **Environment:** Be cognizant of your environment as you prepare for bed and when organizing your sleep environment. Two to three hours before bedtime, dim the lights and turn off all lights in unoccupied rooms. You can even go so far as to brush your teeth in the dark. Avoid watching TV or looking at any computer screens, including phones and tablets and definitely do not allow any of these screens to be in your bedroom. Prepare your bedroom so that it is very dark, as quiet as possible, a bit cooler than the rest of your house or apartment and is kept neat without a bunch of extraneous stuff. Sleep with all doors in your room (entry and closets) closed.
- **Movement:** Establish a daytime exercise routine that you enjoy and that gets your heart rate up for twenty to thirty minutes a day. It is far preferable if this routine either includes or is solely done outdoors in direct sunlight. Outdoor time is a fundamental piece of the sleep hygiene puzzle. Depending on your energy level, age and physical capacity, more, less or different types of exercises may be applicable.
- **Routine:** Create and stick to a healthy nighttime routine based on the guidelines above. Apart from the routine, keep a relaxed and easy mind about it all. If you can't get everything 100% right, feel relieved at what you got right and try not to worry about what you didn't. None of this is meant to make life more rigid or stressful.

Try your best to put all these bullet points to practice from day one. Although big changes can sometimes seem onerous, each one of will ultimately help you to unwind, drift off and stay asleep with more ease than without them.