HPRC

HUMAN PERFORMANCE RESOURCE CENTER

HPRC-ONLINE.ORG

Developed By Tsg's Performance Triad Sleep Work Group

THE CONTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT IS APPROVED AND SUPPORTED BY THE ARMY SURGEON GENERAL.

TOTAL FORCE FITNESS

10 EFFECTIVE SLEEP HABITS FOR EVERYONE

10 Effective Sleep Habits for Everyone

Sleep is vital for health, performance, and well-being – and the better the sleep, the greater its benefits. That is why proper sleep hygiene practices (i.e., that promote optimal sleep duration and quality) are important for everyone.

1. Create a quiet, dark, comfortable sleeping environment. Cover windows with darkening drapes or shades (dark trash bags work too) or wear a sleep mask to block light. Minimize disturbance from environmental noises with foam earplugs or use a room fan to muffle noise. If you can, adjust the room temperature to suit you. If you can't, use extra blankets to stay warm. Use that room fan both to muffle noise AND keep you cool.
2. Use the bedroom only for sleep and sex. Remove the TV, computer, laptop, etc. from your bedroom. Don't eat or drink in bed. Keep discussions / arguments out of the bedroom.
3. Stop caffeine at least 6 hours before bedtime. Caffeine promotes wakefulness and disrupts sleep.
4. Don't drink alcohol before bed. Alcohol initially makes you feel sleepy, but disrupts and lightens your sleep several hours later. In short, alcohol reduces the recuperative value of sleep. Nicotine – and withdrawal from nicotine in the middle of the night – also disrupts sleep. If you need help quitting drinking or using nicotine products, see your healthcare provider for options.
5. Get your exercise in by early evening. Exercising is great – just be sure to finish at least 3 hours before bedtime so that you have plenty of time to wind down.
6. Don't go to bed hungry. A light bedtime snack (e.g., milk and crackers) can be helpful, but do not eat a large meal close to bedtime. And empty your bladder just before you go to bed so that the urge to urinate doesn't disrupt your sleep.

The following sleep hygiene habits are especially critical for those experiencing sleep problems:

7. Maintain a consistent, regular routine that starts with a fixed wake-up time. Start by setting a fixed time to wake up, get out of bed, and get exposure to light each day. Pick a time that you can maintain during the week AND on weekends. Then adjust your bedtime so that you target 7—8 hours of sleep.
8. Get out of bed if you can't sleep. Only go to bed (and stay in bed) when you feel sleepy. Do not try to force yourself to fall asleep – it will tend to make you more awake, making the problem worse. If you wake up in the middle of the night, give yourself about 20 minutes to return to sleep. If you do not return to sleep within 20 minutes, get out of bed and do something relaxing. Do not return to bed until you feel sleepy.
9. Nap wisely *but sparingly*. Napping can be a good way to make up for poor/reduced nighttime sleep, but naps can cause problems falling asleep or staying asleep at night – especially if those naps are longer than 1 hour and/or if they are taken late in the day (after 1500 hours)If you need to nap for safety reasons (e.g., driving), try to take a short (30-60 minute) nap in the late morning or early afternoon (e.g., right after lunch), just enough to take the edge off your sleepiness.
10. Move the bedroom clock to where you cannot see it. If you tend to check the clock two or more times during the night, and if you worry that you are not getting enough sleep, cover the clock face or turn it around so that you can't see it (or remove the clock from the bedroom entirely).