Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

A guide to better sleep

Recently, increased attention has been given to the importance of sleep as a major factor that has a significant impact on all aspects of our lives. Sleep deprivation - that is, sleep that is lacking in quantity, quality, or both - has been called a ‘global epidemic’. It is now acknowledged that the majority of us are actually sleep deprived.



Sleep affects our quality of life on all levels; from productivity at work to mental health to the strength of our immune systems. A lack of sleep can even contribute to public safety, as people who are severely sleep deprived are more likely to get into car accidents, for example. All this recent research indicates that sleep is not a luxury, but an absolute necessity.

So how can we improve the quality of our sleep? Indeed, many aspects of contemporary life are stacked against us: around the clock access to communication by way smartphones, the reigning presence of television, and the lights and sounds of urban life are all obstacles on the road to quality sleep. There are, however, simple changes we can make to improve the duration and quality of our sleep, most of them falling under what is now known as sleep hygiene - proven practices that contribute to healthy sleep.

Seven easy ways to improve your sleep

Below are seven of the easiest ways to integrate sleep hygiene into your life:

Create a space for sleep. Make your bed into a place that’s only for sleeping. This means watching TV, eating, and working in bed are no longer permissible activities.

Make time for sleep. Sleep is precious. Make the time around it precious too. Don’t do things right before bed that can interfere with sleeping, such as working, eating or having heavy emotional conversations.

Stick to a schedule. Go to bed at the same time every night and wake up at the same time every morning. Weekends often interfere with this, but it is very important for longer and better quality sleep that you create and maintain a good routine.

Don’t lay awake in bed. If you don’t fall asleep within 10-15 minutes of shutting the lights, don’t linger there watching the clock. Get out of bed, read a book or listen to some calm music in dim light until you feel tired and then try again.

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Avoid naps. Naps are tempting, especially when you aren't sufficiently rested. However, to get better sleep at night, don’t sleep during the day.

Cut down on caffeine and alcohol. Decreasing your daily caffeine intake will greatly improve your nightly sleep. Alcohol, though it may feel like it helps you fall asleep, actually makes your sleep less restful.

Exercise. Regular exercise is a great way to boost your sleep time and sleep quality. For best results, exercise early in the day, as doing so before bed can actually have the opposite effect.

Establishing healthy habits in relation to sleep is extremely important. Improved sleep will positively affect your work, your relationships and your health, so invest in yourself by getting better at sleeping!