Sleep Hygiene Instructions

Following the instructions below increases the likelihood that you will sleep well. Failing to follow any of these instructions may lead to sleep disruption.

1) **Avoid exercise within 3 hours of bedtime:** Exercising too close to bedtime may put your body in an aroused state when you need to be relaxing. However, participation in regular exercise that occurs earlier in the day may improve sleep.
   - Exercising raises your body temperature. The rebound cooling that naturally occurs after exercising promotes slow wave sleep. This cooling effect may also occur by taking a hot bath 2 hours before bedtime.

2) **Promote a sleep friendly environment:** Blinds, soft music, ear plugs, white noise, air-conditioners, or ceiling fans may help minimize noise, light, and maintain comfortable temperature. Be sure that your mattress is comfortable.
   - Ensure that you have well-darkened room with window coverings that prevent streetlights or daylight from coming through the windows.
   - Background noise from a fan or "white noise" from a radio can mask more disruptive sounds. Earplugs will significantly reduce the noise level, as will a better-insulated room.
   - Room temperature should be between 60°-75°.
   - People are willing to spend over $20,000 for a new car every 4-5 years, which they spend an average of 1 hour in a day. However, they will try to be cheap in buying a mattress in which they spend a 3rd of their life. If you have sleep problems you should buy the best mattress you can conceivably afford and replace it about as often as you replace your car.

3) **Avoid heavy meals within 2 hours of bedtime:** Heavy meals close to bedtime put a strain on your digestive system while you are trying to sleep. A light snack at bedtime, especially a carbohydrate, may help sleep, but avoid greasy or heavy foods.

4) **Avoid excessive fluids in the evening.** Reducing evening fluids can minimize nighttime awakenings. A good rule of thumb is to stay within 1 cup of liquid (1/2 can of soda) within 4 hours of bedtime.
5) **Avoid caffeine within 6 hours of bedtime**: Caffeine is a stimulant that can lead to increased arousal and difficulty falling and staying asleep. Some people are very sensitive to the effects of caffeine and the use of caffeine in the afternoon or evening may disrupt sleep.

6) **Avoid nicotine within 2 hours of bedtime**: Nicotine, like caffeine, is a stimulant that can make falling and staying asleep difficult.

7) **Avoid alcohol within 2 hours of bedtime**: Although you may initially feel sleepy after drinking alcohol, alcohol use near bedtime usually leads to more awake time during the night.

8) **Do not go to bed worried or angry**: Use your bedtime to wind down. If you are especially worried, set aside a time earlier in the evening to write down a "worry list." Then put these concerns aside until the next day by closing the book.

   - Sleep occurs in 5 stages (stage 1, 2, 3, 4, and REM sleep). REM sleep is associated with increased brain activity and is also associated with dreaming. Most people wake up briefly (for 10 - 90 seconds) after REM sleep before re-entering stage 1 sleep. If you take your problems to bed with you, they are likely to come up during REM sleep and/or the brief awake period following REM sleep, engaging your brain in problem solving rather than sleeping.

   - All parts of the brain do not fall asleep or stay asleep at the same time. The part of the brain that is most likely asleep in the middle of the night has a lot to do with focusing your attention on things, logical thought, and the assessment of what is reasonable or not reasonable. With these functions compromised, good problem solving is unlikely and thinking about problems leads to useless worrying.

9) **Do not try to fall asleep**: Sleep cannot be commanded or willed. The mere act of trying is incompatible with sleeping. You cannot be relaxed and exerting effort at the same time. You cannot unfocus your thoughts and disengage when your thoughts are focused and you are engaged in a task - trying to sleep.

   - "Do or do not. There is no try." - Yoda, Star Wars - The Empire Strikes Back.