

Sleep Hygiene Primer:

Ensuring you have the opportunity of 8 hours of sleep every night (for adults, more for those under age 25, perhaps less for elderly), is of the UTMOST importance to your blood sugar control, insulin levels, ability to lose weight, as well as your general health, including preventing cardiovascular disease, optimizing your immune system, fighting cancer and dementia, improving mental health, cognitive function, and ability to cope with stress.

Try to preserve the same bed time and wake time regardless of weekend or weekday.

Avoid LED/blue light (phones/screens) for 2 hours prior to bed, and if needed turn screens down to night mode with sundown. Ensure some exposure to natural daylight during the day. This helps to preserve your natural melatonin surge for sleep.

Don't lie in bed reading or working or watching TV. Your mind will soon associate your bed with WAKEFULNESS. You can sit in a chair to do these activities.

Don't lie in bed awake for too long. If you are feeling awake after 20 minutes in bed, get up and do something that is not energy or mind provoking. Return to bed once you are feeling ready to sleep again.

Avoid having phones or TV in the bedroom. Having your phone around with the habit of checking it first thing in the morning (or the middle of the night) and all the anxiety a phone opens up, may sabotage your ability to go into deep sleep.

Having your core body temperature lower as you sleep and throughout is very conducive to the natural architecture of healthy sleep.

1. Set the temperature of your bedroom lower for sleep (like 18-19 degrees for example). Consider taking a hot bath/shower as part of your wind down routine. This vasodilates and draws heat away from your core, so that your temperature drops preparing for sleep.
2. The following activities can also increase your body temperature before sleep. Complete your last meal 3 hours before sleeping. Avoid sugary/carb snacks before bedtime. Avoid alcohol 3 hours before sleeping. Avoiding exercise in the evening may also be helpful.

Consider meditation before bedtime to reduce stress levels. Having your anxiety levels low prior to sleep will give you a better chance of getting a deep sleep. Apps like Headspace or Calm can be helpful.

Sleeping pills and other over the counter medications, including alcohol, may help get you unconscious, (like hitting you over the head with a bat), but don't ensure you get the proper sleep architecture to restore yourself for another day of stress ahead. These methods fool you into thinking you have slept, "fake sleep", and enable you to delay seeking what real sleep feels

like. Don't short-change yourself. You will still end up feeling foggy, tired and forgetful the next day, despite "perceived sleep".

You may need to avoid caffeine (eg tea, coffee, chocolate) in the afternoon and onwards if you are sensitive.

If you wake up for other reasons through the night, try to understand why and reduce these disruptions if possible.

Check out "Ted Talk with Matt Walker" on the importance of sleep, or his book "Why we Sleep".

Add Magnesium Bisglycinate 400 mg at night, for sleep and leg cramps. (Health food stores)

CBT Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for sleep is very helpful. There are some online sites for more information (eg Sleepio.com, cbtforinsomnia.com) and also seeing a therapist in person for CBT can be a very good option.

Dr. Colleen Cheung, August 2019