



Sleep hygiene isn't so much about brushing your teeth as it is about making sure your environment is conducive to sleep. This will help improve not only the quantity of sleep you get, but also its quality.

The major factors here are management of light and the cultivation of a relaxing setting.

- Ensure that your sleeping environment is truly dark. If you don't have blackout curtains, tack a blanket over the window. If you have electronic clocks, LED lights, etc, remove or obscure them.
- Plan on sleeping 9 hours every night. If you need to wake up at 7:00am, make sure you're in bed by 10:00pm. Be there, even if you're not able to sleep the whole night through at first; your body will adjust over time.
- Set a bedtime alarm! Have it ring about an hour before you want to have lights out & head on the pillow. This is your cue to start your bedtime routine.
- Minimize lighting and dim necessary lights for at least one hour before bed. If you don't have dimmers, use candles or a low-watt lamp.
- Turn the heat down as you move toward bedtime; a cooler bedroom is more conducive to sleep.
- Avoid eating for two hours or more before you intend to be asleep, as digestion raises your body temperature and that can keep you awake.
- Likewise, it's best not to exercise at night, as it will raise your temperature and heighten alertness.
- Daytime activity and exposure to bright light will help establish a normal diurnal rhythm.
- Turn off all sources of media one hour before bedtime – television, game systems, radio, computers, phone/txting .
- If you must use your laptop after dark, install f.lux to change the quality of the screen's light: stereopsis.com/flux
- Build a bedtime routine incorporating any of the following: a relaxing or sedative tea, a hot foot bath, quiet music, reading, journaling, meditating and releasing the day's worries, or other relaxing activities for one hour before bedtime.
- Inhale, exhale. Two minutes of simple deep breathing practice can drop you right into a relaxed and restful state.
- Melatonin supplements can be useful in acute situations, but it's better to avoid them if possible as they can build dependence or inhibit your body's natural production of melatonin.
- Avoid sedative drugs if at all possible. Valium and other sedatives may alter the quality of sleep and block the body's ability to repair and rebuild tissues.