

5.10 Sleep Hygiene

Invest in the quantity and quality of your sleep.

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Sometimes, it seems as though modern life conspires against allowing us enough sleep. Our jobs are stressful; we live in urban areas filled with noise and distraction; and electronic devices, especially social networking apps, hijack our brains, keeping us hooked on dopamine when we want to drift off.

Unless we take conscious steps to protect our sleeping environment, we are likely to suffer from shorter-duration, lower-quality sleep. This affects every aspect of our lives, from our health to our relationships to our ability to focus. Sleep hygiene refers to any strategies that enable us to sleep more deeply, restfully, and consistently.

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- Better quality of sleep improves all aspects of your life—physical, mental, and emotional.

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- When you're overstimulated, you may be reluctant to wind down and feel an urge to continue engaging with the world.

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General trends indicate that not only are most of us sleeping less but also the quality of our sleep is declining. This makes us all more tired and, therefore, less effective, productive, and happy during our waking hours. The most pervasive cause of poor sleep hygiene is electronic devices. When we're wired from excessive screen time, we find it difficult to calm down and sleep. Our electronics bombard us with blue light wavelengths, which increase wakefulness and can disrupt healthy sleep patterns. Aside from blue light, phone notifications also trigger excessive adrenaline. Apps are designed to stimulate the brain's reward mechanism and keep us swiping, scrolling, or messaging. That rush makes it difficult to go to sleep.

Therefore, controlling your access to electronic devices is one way to improve your chances of falling asleep quickly and getting good quality sleep. Generally speaking, it's beneficial to your focus to disable many of these notifications, and you can even configure your phone to block some apps completely as you approach bedtime. Many modern phones also have a setting that allows you to turn off blue light emissions in the evening. Ideally, it's best to stay away from all electronics for two to three hours before you go to bed. And if you truly want a good night's sleep, do not watch the news or anything stimulating before tucking in.

Additionally, there are several other habits you can get into to create a restful bedroom environment and nurture better sleep. Keep your bedroom very dark and as quiet as possible, with little external stimulation. The human body sleeps best in cool temperatures, so you may want to invest in a fan or air conditioning if you live in a hot climate. Keep your bedtime and your pre-bed routine consistent so that you send signals to your brain that it's time to wind down and prepare for sleep. Additionally, try to avoid eating close to bedtime; the digestive process can prevent you from fully relaxing.

If your mind still races after all this, you can try taking a hot shower before bed, applying calming essential oils to your pillow, or—if you regularly struggle with insomnia—seeking professional help from a sleep specialist.

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1. “Top 15 Proven Tips to Sleep Better at Night”:
<https://healthline.com/nutrition/17-tips-to-sleep-better>
 2. “Blue Light: What It Is and How It Affects Sleep”:
<https://sleepfoundation.org/bedroom-environment/blue-light>
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