

# SLEEP HYGIENE

## Overall sleep quality decreases in perimenopause and menopause.

Complaints regarding sleep include difficulty falling and staying asleep. Sleeping less than seven hours per night has been associated with increased mortality, as well as cardiovascular disease, obesity, mood disorders, and diabetes. Sleep difficulties are more common in postmenopausal women than in premenopausal women, with those undergoing surgical menopause experiencing even poorer sleep quality. Women on menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) show a marked improvement in sleep quality. Some antidepressants have also been shown to cause drowsiness, which may assist with sleep.

## STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE SLEEP

Obtaining healthy sleep is important for both physical and mental health, improving productivity and overall quality of life. Strategies to help with sleep may include medication, lifestyle changes, and behaviour modification. Lifestyle modification includes regular schedules, the elimination of caffeine and alcohol, comfortable bedding and temperature, as well as incorporating sleep hygiene.

Sleep hygiene means having both daily routines and a bedroom environment that promotes consistent, uninterrupted sleep. Fixing a sleep schedule ensures that sleep is an essential part of your day. Some key strategies to improve sleep include:

- **Maintain a consistent sleep schedule - regular times for going to bed and waking up.**
- **Daylight exposure.**
- **Reduce screen time at least thirty minutes before bed to avoid blue light disruption.**
- **Ensure your sleep environment is comfortable, quiet and conducive to rest.**
- **Avoid napping during the day.**
- **Engage in calming activities in the evening and avoid vigorous exercise close to bedtime.**
- **Limit caffeine and alcohol intake, especially later in the day.**
- **Eat lighter meals in the evening, avoid going to bed on an empty stomach, and try not to eat right before bedtime.**
- **Reserve the bed for sleep (and sex) only.**
- **Practice relaxation techniques to manage stress or anxiety before sleep.**

Rather than focusing on sleep as your goal, it is sometimes easier to focus on relaxation. Meditation, mindfulness, paced breathing, and other relaxation techniques can help put you in the right mindset for bed.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), using stimulus control and sleep restriction, has shown benefits for improving sleep quality. CBT alone is less effective without the addition of these behavioural techniques.

Existing research suggests that yoga nidra may help people fall asleep faster and experience higher-quality sleep, though further comprehensive studies are required to validate these benefits. Yoga Nidra is an audible yoga practice that guides the listener into a state of relaxation between waking and sleeping, effectively improving sleep quality, allowing you to fall asleep faster at night and making staying asleep more effortless.

## DAYTIME AND EVENING ROUTINES

Positive daytime routines can support your circadian rhythm. Sunlight exposure is one of the key drivers of circadian rhythms that can encourage quality sleep. Regular physical activity can make it easier to fall asleep at night. Nicotine stimulates the body, which can lead to numerous sleeping problems in smokers.

Obvious measures such as omitting stimulants such as coffee in the afternoon and evening, avoiding dining late, and limiting screen time just before bed are all beneficial. Although alcohol can make it easier to fall asleep, the effect wears off, disrupting sleep later in the night. Other natural options to assist with securing a good night's sleep include a long-acting melatonin preparation before bed and lavender products.

## CUSTOMISING YOUR SLEEP ROUTINE

Finding the ideal sleep hygiene varies between individuals. The priority is to optimise your environment and habits to facilitate better sleep. Sometimes it may be necessary to test out different adjustments to find out what helps the most.

It is important to ensure that there are no other causes of poor sleep, including sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome, or mood disorders. Talking with your health provider may help distinguish possible other causes of sleep disturbance.