

Getting Enough Sleep

Many students do not sleep well. Sometimes sleep problems are caused by factors outside our direct control, such as loud roommates, a medical condition, or living near a train track. More often than not, however, a student's sleeping problem is caused by poor "sleep hygiene", or poor choices about sleep that are within our control to alter.

Here is a list of practices conducive to good sleep, adapted from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine:

- Try to sleep only when you are drowsy.
- If you are unable to fall asleep or stay asleep, leave your bedroom and engage in a quiet activity elsewhere. Do not permit yourself to fall asleep outside the bedroom. Return to bed when - and only when - you are sleepy. Repeat this process as often as necessary throughout the night.
- Maintain a regular arise time, even on days off work and on weekends.
- Use your bedroom only for sleep and relaxing activity.

- Avoid napping during the daytime. If the urge to nap becomes overwhelming, limit nap time to a single nap of less than one hour, no later than 3PM.
- Distract your mind. Try reading or watching a videotape or listening to books on tape. It may be necessary to go into another room to do these.
- Avoid caffeine within four to six hours of going to bed.
- Avoid the use of nicotine close to bedtime or during the night
- Do not drink alcoholic beverages within four to six hours of bedtime.
- While a light snack before bedtime can help promote sound sleep, make sure it is just a snack and not a large meal.
- Avoid strenuous exercise within six hours of bedtime.
- Minimize light, noise, and extremes in temperature in the bedroom.

Adapted from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (2002)

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