

# Healthy Sleep



**CCNM**  
Canadian College of  
Naturopathic Medicine

Integrative  
Cancer  
Centre

## Sleep Hygiene Recommendations

### **Create the right sleep environment:**

- Your room should be cool, quiet, and as dark as possible. Blackout curtains can be used to make a room with a window darker. Ear plugs, a fan or a white noise machine can block out disruptive noises. Invest in a mattress and pillow that are comfortable for you.
- Turn the clock away from you and always use the alarm. Looking at the clock time on awakening can cause emotional arousal that prevents return to sleep.

### **Set a routine for yourself:**

- Keep a regular sleep-wake schedule, with a consistent wakeup time, 7 days per week.
- Avoid sleeping in and extensive periods of horizontal rest during the day
- Exercise daily – at least 30 minutes of an activity with enough intensity to cause sweating
- If you must nap, do so before 4pm and keep them to under 1 hour in length

### **Practice a relaxing bedtime ritual:**

- Plan a quiet period before lights out where you avoid doing anything stimulating:
  - Try reading a relaxing book, listen to calming music, take a warm Epsom salts bath, light yoga/stretching, try meditation/breath work, mindfulness activities, adult colouring books, journaling, prayer, etc.
- Use the bedroom for sleep and intimacy only. Using the bed as a reading space, office or media centre conditions you to be alert in a place that should be associated with quiet and sleep.
- If you awaken during the night and are wide awake, get up, leave the bedroom and do something quiet until you feel drowsy-tired, then return to bed. Don't stay in bed if you are awake in the middle of the night.

### **Restrictions before bedtime:**

- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, nicotine and other recreational drugs, all of which disturb sleep. If you must smoke, do so before 7pm.
- Avoid large meals late in the evening. A light carbohydrate snack, if needed, can be helpful.
- Avoid stimulating activities prior to bed such as watching TV, using your phone or other blue-lit devices, balancing your checkbook or having an upsetting conversation
  - Blue light emitted from cellphones, computers, tablets, etc. suppresses our body's melatonin production, which we need to sleep.
  - Try downloading an app that decreases blue-light emission according to the time of day, such as F.lux or Sunsetscreen.

## Common Sleep Problems

- Problems with initiating sleep (greater than 30 minutes)
- Problems staying asleep (waking up multiple times throughout the night or waking up and not being able to fall back asleep for several hours)
- Mood disturbances contributing to sleep problems (Anxiety, Depression)
- Prescription medications that list insomnia as a side-effect of taking a medication
- May be caused by other health conditions – talk with your naturopathic doctor

## Helpful Sleep Aid Products

- Chamomile or other Sleepytime tea
- Epsom salts foot bath
- Inhalation of lavender essential oil