

Sleep Hygiene Guidelines

Avoid Caffeine-Caffeine disrupts sleep and should be avoided 4-6 hours before bedtime:

Caffeine is a stimulant that produces fragmented and lighter sleep. Some people are more sensitive to caffeine than others, but in general, it affects everyone, even those who claim it has no impact on their sleep. Caffeine taken prior to bed may delay sleep onset, or disrupt sleep throughout the night. Caffeine is present in coffee, tea, chocolate, several soft drinks and some over-the-counter medications.

Avoid Nicotine-Nicotine disturbs sleep and should be avoided, especially around bedtime:

Nicotine is also a stimulant, even though most smokers claim it helps them relax. Although it would be best to quit altogether, smoking should be reduced, especially before bed. It is also important to avoid smoking when waking up in the middle of the night because nighttime awakenings may become conditioned to nicotine withdrawal symptoms.

Watch your food and eating patterns-A light snack may promote sleep:

Food intake can be sleep inducing, but the timing and amount of calories is important. Having a snack before bed seems to promote sleep. People tend to be sleepier after a snack high in carbohydrates, rather than protein. Foods high in L-tryptophan, such as milk, seem to promote sleep in some people. Avoid snacks in the middle of the night, because nighttime awakenings may become conditioned to hunger. Also, avoid drinking excessive amounts of fluids.

Avoid vigorous exercise-Exercise elevates autonomic activity and may interfere with sleep onset:

Regular exercise is excellent, but the impact of exercise on sleep depends on its timing. Regular exercise in the afternoon tends to deepen sleep. If you exercise after dinner, make it light.

Avoid alcohol-Alcohol is the most likely substance to cause sleep disruption:

Avoid alcohol 4-6 hours before bedtime. Although a "nightcap" may help tense people relax and fall asleep, alcohol is a central nervous system depressant and produces lighter and more fragmented sleep.

Make an appointment with Dr. Rheuark at (310) 373-8777.