

## **Sleep Checklist**

Handouts noted here can be found on the website: <https://webspace.clarkson.edu/~lrussek/research.html>

### **Figure out why you have trouble sleeping**

- Keep a sleep diary to track sleep and what might be perpetuating poor sleep. The Sleep Foundation one is good: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-diary>
- If your body is uncomfortable or pain keeps you awake or wakes you, focus on changing the physical environment and pain management.
- If your mind won't quiet down, focus on relaxation strategies.

### **Sleep Schedule**

- Go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day to set your biological clock.
- Allow enough time in bed for adequate sleep. E.g., 9 hrs in bed to get 8 hrs of sleep.
- Get exposure to sunlight in the morning to set the biological clock. If you are unable to get outdoors or live somewhere dark, consider getting a full spectrum light box.
- Avoid daytime napping. If you need to nap, limit to 30 minutes and avoid evenings.

### **Sleep Environment (See “*Sleep Hygiene and Positioning*” handout)**

- Use the bed only for sleep and intimacy. No TV, video games or prolonged reading (it is okay to read as part of your wind-down routine).
- If you are having trouble sleeping, after 20 minutes of lying in bed, get out of bed and do something relaxing/boring. This prevents you from associating the bed with sleeplessness.
- Cool: between 60-70°F. A slight drop in body temperature cues the brain for sleep.
- Dark. Use blackout curtains or a sleep mask.
- Quiet, or sounds should be restful. Use white noise or sleep music. Use a sleep mask with earphones if your sleep your white noise or music disturbs your sleep partner.
- Wash sheets and blankets frequently to minimize allergens. Consider running an air purifier.
- Some people like scents, such as lavender. Use only if it doesn't trigger allergies.
- Wearing socks to bed can help you fall asleep faster, stay asleep longer, decrease hot flashes at night.

### **Exercise**

- Get exercise during the day, 20-30 minutes at least 2-3 hrs before bedtime is ideal. This can be gentle.
- Try relaxing exercise at bedtime: diaphragmatic breathing, sleep yoga, etc.

### **Food and Drink**

- Avoid caffeinated foods/drinks at least 4 hrs before bedtime: coffee, black/green tea, chocolate, soda.
- Avoid alcohol and smoking at least 4 hrs before bedtime.
- Avoid a large or spicy meal 2-3 hrs before bedtime. A light snack is okay.
- Avoid drinking large quantities of fluids 2-3 hrs before bedtime.

### **Use a relaxing bedtime routine to cue your brain that it is bedtime. Plan at least 30 minutes.**

- Avoid devices (cell phones, tablets, laptops, TVs) as the blue light triggers wakefulness. If you must use these devices, see if they have blue light filters (makes everything look orange) or wear blue light filtering glasses (they look orange).
- Avoid stressful activities before bed, such as watching news, stressful TV shows, or arguments.
- Take a warm bath; the cooling of your body afterwards cues the brain to sleep.
- Read a book, do a crossword, diaphragmatic or slow breathing, sleep yoga etc.
- Do a sleep meditation. These typically include imagery that facilitates sleep. Many apps include sleep meditations. Sleep Foundation reviews sleep apps: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/best-sleep-apps>
- Sleep music can calm the brain. Binaural music, where different frequencies play in each ear, can encourage sleep states. <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/noise-and-sleep/binaural-beats>

- Use Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-i). Research shows it works as well as medication. There are many CBT-I apps available, but a free one is **CBT-I Coach**. (<https://mobile.va.gov/app/cbt-i-coach>).
- Some people use a ‘worry journal’ to write down things that worry you so you can stop thinking about them until morning. Writing down your worries allows your brain to let go of them until morning.

**Make sure you are physically comfortable. (See “*Sleep Hygiene and Positioning*” handout)**

- Use mattress toppers or featherbeds to create a comfortable and supportive surface.
- Use pillows to support or position your body to minimize pain. If you are lying on your side, try to keep your spine straight. You may benefit from a pillow under your waist to decrease pressure on your shoulder and hip. A body pillow or pregnancy pillow may help because you can lean onto the pillow and decrease pressure on your body.
- Some people find weighted blankets helpful to calm the nervous system. Don’t use if they cause joint subluxations. Some adults like pediatric blankets as they are smaller and lighter.
- Manage pain by using self-care strategies before bed. (See “*Pain self-care plan*” handout.)
- If you experience night-time subluxations, try to place joints in more stable positions (e.g., ankles at 90° rather than pressed down by blankets). Wearing braces to bed can also help.
- Make sure you are breathing through your nose (not your mouth). Sleep apnea can sometimes be relieved by lying on your side (instead of your back). Sleep apnea might also be managed through myofunctional exercises (tongue and mouth exercises): <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/snoring/mouth-exercises-to-stop-snoring>. Talk to your doctor if you have unmanaged sleep apnea.

**Medications**

- Check your medications to see if any can interfere with sleep. The top 10 are listed here. Ask your pharmacist or primary care provider if you don’t know if your medications fall into these categories. If you do take any of these medications, talk to your doctor about alternatives or whether you can take them in the mornings, which might decrease how much it disrupts your sleep. Top 10: Alpha-blockers, Beta-blockers, Corticosteroids, SSRI antidepressants, ACE inhibitors, Angiotensin II-receptor blockers, Cholinesterase inhibitors, H1 antagonists, Glucosamine/chondroitin, Statins. (list from <https://www.aarp.org/health/drugs-supplements/info-04-2013/medications-that-can-cause-insomnia.html> )
- Avoid unprescribed or over-the-counter sleeping pills, or prolonged prescription sleeping pills. You may experience temporary rebound insomnia when you stop taking them.

**Supplements**

- Melatonin. While research is not clear about whether melatonin improves sleep, it is much safer than sleep medication. Adults can take up to 5 mg. Children 6-12 years old no more than 2-3 mg. Children 3-5 years old 1-2 mg. There is little research about melatonin in children. <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/melatonin>
- Magnesium can also enhance sleep. If taking orally, use Mg glycinate as some forms of Mg can cause diarrhea (avoid Mg Citrate). Mg creams or Epsom salt soaks can be effective, as Mg is readily absorbed through the skin. <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/magnesium>
- CBD, oral or topical, may also help sleep either by increasing sleepiness, decreasing pain or decreasing anxiety. There is little research about CBD.

Resources used to create this checklist:

- [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)
- Sleep Foundation has a “14 Nights to Better Sleep” program where they email you information about one topic a day for two weeks. <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene/14-nights-to-better-sleep>
- Siengsukon CF, Al-Dughmi M, Stevens S. Sleep Health Promotion: Practical Information for Physical Therapists. *Phys Ther*. 2017;97(8):826-36. [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile/cbticoach\\_app\\_public.asp](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile/cbticoach_app_public.asp)
- Matheson E, Hainer BL. Insomnia: Pharmacologic Therapy. *Am Fam Physician*. 2017;96(1):29-35.
- André, C. Better Breathing Brings Better Health. *Scientific American*. Available at: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/proper-breathing-brings-better-health/> . Proper breathing for better energy.
- Walker, M. *Why We Sleep*. *Scribner*, 2018. How to sleep effectively. (Note that there is a Summary version of this book)