

## Sleep Hygiene Principles

From *Thirty Days to Natural Blood Pressure Control: The “No Pressure” Solution* (Table 9.5)

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Get *Thirty Days to Natural Blood Pressure Control* in its entirety as a print book, audiobook, or eBook at: [www.compasshealth.net/purchase](http://www.compasshealth.net/purchase) or

<https://www.amazon.com/Thirty-Natural-Blood-Pressure-Control/dp/1942730020>.

- ✓ **Exercise Regularly** for at least 30 minutes daily, preferably more than four hours prior to bedtime. Exercise closer to bedtime stimulates some individuals and will make it more difficult for them to sleep.
- ✓ **Get Bright Light Exposure During the Day.** Bright light exposure early in the day helps you fall asleep. Bright light exposure just prior to sunset helps individuals sleep through the night.
- ✓ **Keep Evening Meals Light – at Least Four Hours Before Bedtime.** Although late night eating can make you feel sleepy, a rising blood sugar will undermine the production of growth hormone, a compound that even adults need to get peak rejuvenation from sleep.
- ✓ **Avoid Caffeinated Beverages.** Caffeine after lunchtime may erode sleep quality. Even earlier in the day, caffeine may affect sleep by lowering melatonin levels.
- ✓ **Avoid Alcohol.** Late afternoon and early evening alcohol intake interfere with sleep architecture (the normal rhythmicity of sleep which is necessary for optimal restoration); alcohol at other times erodes resolve, making it easier to neglect to practice good lifestyle habits throughout the day.
- ✓ **Avoid Nicotine Intake.** Nicotine isn't your friend when it comes to blood pressure, or health in general. If you still haven't made a complete break, avoid this stimulant for at least four hours before bedtime to get the best sleep.

- ✓ **Avoid High-Risk Naps.** Naps that are longer than 30 minutes or later in the day (after 3 PM) are more likely to interfere with sleep.
- ✓ **Maintain a Regular Sleep Schedule,** even on the weekends. Your body functions best when it can lock into a daily *circadian* rhythm. If you get up at the same time each day, your body will properly time the release of hormones like cortisol, so you'll be ready to hit the ground running.
- ✓ **Have a Sleep Routine.** Your body does best if you give it cues to wind down. Examples include listening to soothing music, praying, meditating and reading inspirational material. Also consider taking a warm or tepid (lukewarm) bath or a hot shower.
- ✓ **Mentally Prepare for Sleep.** Wind down mentally before bedtime; don't take anger, worries or concerns with you into the bedroom. (Incidentally, watching the news is generally not an effective way to do this.)
- ✓ **Refocus Your Brain.** If you can't mentally wind down, go to sleep listening to something that is engaging but not stimulating. This is best accomplished by listening to something familiar. Such an activity can focus your brain on something other than unpaid bills, tomorrow's meeting, your retirement account, or other waking activities.
- ✓ **Avoid Late-Night Light-Emitting Screens.** For an hour before retiring, avoid any significant use of light-emitting screens (laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc.).

- ✓ **Go to Bed Early.** Because restorative hormones, like growth hormone and melatonin, peak earlier in the night, sleep before midnight may be better sleep than after. Some experts recommend turning in by 10 pm.
- ✓ **Rethink the Alarm Clock.** Depending on an alarm is usually an indication that you're shorting yourself on sleep. After all, if you get to bed early enough, you should be able to get your required sleep and still be up in time for your morning routine. However, tossing your alarm clock may be premature. For example, anxiety-prone individuals may sleep more fitfully without the assurance of an alarm preventing their oversleeping. Bottom line: you may be better off, sooner or later, without an alarm clock.
- ✓ **Ensure Restful Surroundings.** Cool, dark, comfortable and free of excessive noise are all qualities of an optimal sleeping environment. Wearing earplugs or blinders may be necessary in certain circumstances.
- ✓ **Get Up and Try Again.** Don't try to "force sleep." If you've been lying in bed for more than 20 minutes, get up and do something non-stimulating. Then try to go back to sleep again. Such non-stimulating activities include low intensity exercises, like stretching or marching in place at your bedside. If you can do this safely with the lights out, so much the better. (Avoid doing things that are stimulating or interesting as this can increase wakefulness.)

### References

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