



Healthy Habits of Good Sleep

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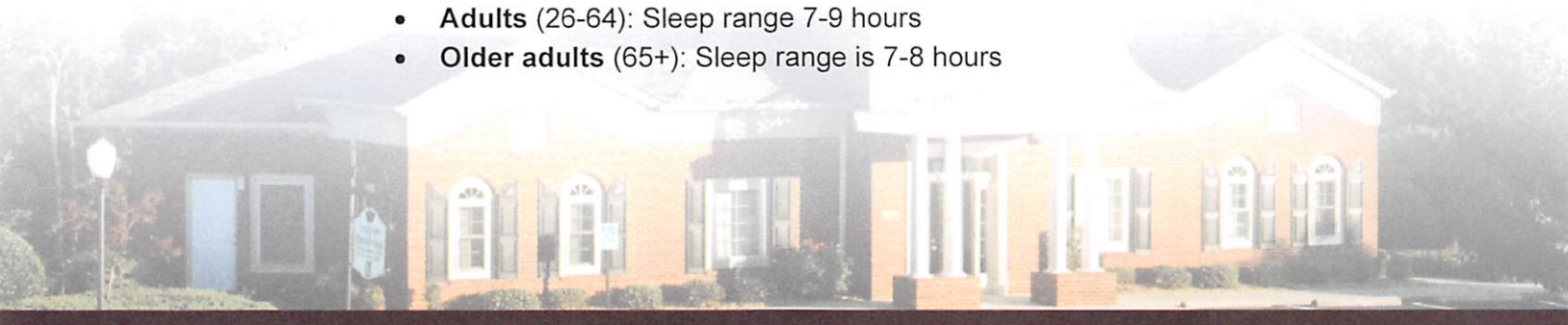
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Sleep hygiene is the term used to describe good sleep habits. Considerable research has gone into developing a set of guidelines and tips which are designed to enhance good sleeping. There is a lot of evidence that suggest these strategies can provide long-term solutions to sleep difficulties.

There are many medications which are used to treat insomnia, but these tend to only be effective in the short term. Ongoing use of sleeping pills may lead to dependence and interfere with developing good sleep habits independent of medication, thereby prolonging sleep difficulties. Talk to your health professional about what is right for you, but we recommend good sleep hygiene as an important part of treating insomnia, either with other strategies such as medication or cognitive therapy or alone.

- **Don't go to bed unless you are sleepy.** If you are not sleepy at bedtime, read a book, listen to soft music, do some breathing exercises or find something to relax your body and distract your mind.
- **Begin rituals that help you relax each night before bed.** This can include things such as a warm bath, light snack or a few minutes of reading or meditation.
- **Go to bed and get up around the same time each night/day.** Do this even on weekends and holidays.
- **Get a full night of sleep on a regular basis.** Get enough sleep so that you feel rested. According to the National Sleep Foundation the hours are as follows...
 - **Newborns** (0-3 months): Sleep range 14-17 hours each day
 - **Infants** (4-11 months): Sleep range 12-15 hours
 - **Toddlers** (1-2 years): Sleep range 11-14 hours
 - **Preschoolers** (3-5): Sleep range 10-13 hours
 - **School age children** (6-13): Sleep range 9-11 hours
 - **Teenagers** (14-17): Sleep range 8-10 hours
 - **Younger adults** (18-25): Sleep range 7-9 hours
 - **Adults** (26-64): Sleep range 7-9 hours
 - **Older adults** (65+): Sleep range is 7-8 hours





- **Take short naps.** If you do take naps, try to keep them between 10- 20 minutes and avoid taking them after 3:00.
- **Keep a regular schedule.** Try to keep meals around the same times daily. Take medications in the morning if you can and try not to eat within 3 hours of your bedtime.

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- **Do not read, write, eat, watch TV, talk on the phone in bed.**
- **Do not have any caffeine after lunch and do not have a beer, glass of wine or any other alcohol within 6 hours of bedtime.**
- **Avoid any strenuous exercise within 6 hours of your bedtime.** You should exercise on a regular basis, but try to do it earlier in the day. Always consult your doctor before beginning an exercise program.
- **Avoid sleeping pills or be careful taking them.** Most doctors do not prescribe sleeping pills for periods longer than 3 weeks. Do not drink alcohol while taking them.
- **Try to get rid of your worries.** Try yoga, meditation or breathing exercises. Your bed is a place to rest, not worry.
- **Bath time.** Having a hot bath 1-2 hours before bedtime can help. Research shows sleepiness is associated with a drop in temperature, such as going into a cool room after a hot bath.
- **Use a sleep diary.** This worksheet can be a useful way with keeping up with your sleep patterns. Because you don't want to clock watch, you should only do it for a couple of weeks. Then try it again a couple of months later to see how you have progressed.

