Flagstaff Counseling Center

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**Sleep Hygiene**

**Avoid caffeine 6 to 8 hours before bedtime.** Caffeine disrupts sleep. Thus, drinking caffeinated beverages near bedtime should be avoided.

**Avoid nicotine before bedtime.** Nicotine can keep you awake. Avoid tobacco near bedtime and during the night.

**Avoid alcohol after dinner.** Alcohol often promotes the onset of sleep but it interrupts your natural sleep pattern. Do not consume it any closer than 4 hours before going to bed.

**Sleep medications are effective only temporarily.** Sleep medications lose their effectiveness in about 2 to 4 weeks when taken regularly. Over time, sleeping pills can actually make sleep problems worse, and withdrawal from the medicine can lead to an insomnia rebound. Keep use of sleeping pills infrequent, but do not worry if you need to use one on an occasional basis.

**Regular exercise:** No exercise within 2 hours of bedtime because it may elevate nervous system activity and interfere with the ability to fall asleep.

**Bedroom environment:** moderate temperature, quiet, and dark. Noises can be masked with background white noise (such as the noise of a fan) or with earplugs. Bedrooms may be darkened with blackout shades or sleep masks can be worn.

**Eating:** Finish your last meal at least 2-3 hours before bedtime. However, do not go to bed hungry. A small snack (bowl of cereal, cheese, glass of milk) may help.

**Avoid naps:** The sleep you obtain during the day takes away from sleep you need that night. If you must nap, schedule it before 3PM and do not sleep for more than 15-20 minutes.

**Unwind:** Allow yourself at least an hour to wind-down before bedtime. Find what works for you (listening to music, showering, drinking tea, journaling, etc.)

**Regular sleep schedule:** Keep a consistent bed and wake time all 7 days of the week. Keeping a regular wake time helps set your circadian rhythm so that your body is ready for sleep at the desired time.

**Stimulus Control Procedures**

1. **Go to bed when you are sleepy.** The longer you are in bed, the more the bed is associated with a place to be awake instead of asleep. Delay bedtime until sleepy.
2. **Get out of bed when you can’t fall asleep or go back to sleep in about 15 minutes.** Get out of bed if you don’t fall asleep fairly soon (don’t watch the clock). Return to bed only when you are drowsy. The goal is to reconnect your bed with being asleep.
3. **Use the bed for sleep and sex only.** Do not watch TV, listen to the radio, do work, eat or read in your bed or bedroom.