Good Sleep Hygiene May Help

Protect Against Infectious Diseases

Sleep plays a powerful role in supporting healthy immune system function; in fact, these two things are closely connected. A lack of sleep can increase the likelihood of infection. Illness can disrupt your sleep further, which in turn slows down your recovery time. Consistent sleep better prepares your body to fight off unexpected illness, and getting enough of it supports your overall health and well-being.

The benefits of sleep are both preventive and restorative; experts recommend between 7 to 9 hours of sleep every night for optimal health.

Healthy Sleep Habits

Good sleep hygiene involves routines that help facilitate the body's circadian rhythm and reduce environmental stressors that could be affecting your slumber. Simply knowing how certain behaviors affect your sleep patterns may help you adjust your daytime behaviors to improve sleep later. You can support your sleep and your health just by making positive changes in your daily routine.

TIPS FOR IMPROVING YOUR SLEEP HYGIENE

- **Maintain a consistent sleep schedule**. Go to bed and wake up around the same time every day—even on the weekends.

- **Take in more daylight and limit exposure to artificial light**. Daylight reinforces the 'awake' phase of your body's sleep cycle, so spending more time outside during the day can make it easier for you to fall asleep at night. If you are inside most of the day, try to sit close to a window or take breaks outside when you can. In the evening, spend less time with electronics. Blue light from back-lit devices like cell phones, computer monitors, and tablets mimics daylights and stimulates alertness. Using electronics before bed tricks your body into thinking it's still daytime and can make it harder for you to fall asleep. Limit your use of electronics at least one hour before bedtime. Use blue light glasses if you need to be on a screen prior to bed.

- **Stay active.** Exercising during the day helps you feel alert and promotes better sleep at night. Strenuous activity at night, however, can make it harder to fall asleep. Give yourself lots of time between finishing your workout and winding down before bed.

- **Avoid caffeine, heavy meals, and alcohol before bed**. What you eat and when you eat it could be holding you back from a restful night's sleep. Try to avoid large meals before bed and limit your consumption of alcohol. While it may help you fall asleep, alcohol can cause you to wake up more frequently during the night. Caffeine may impair sleep if consumed six hours prior to bedtime.

- **Take time to unwind**. Practice mindfulness or engage in light stretching before bed as a way to reduce stress or anxiety.

- **Improve your sleep environment.** Your bedroom could be preventing you from quality sleep. Check out the tips below for turning your room into a sleep haven.

Every individual is different, and not all of these tips may work for you. Research on how to best improve sleep is still in progress, so for the time being, create a sleep routine that best fits your lifestyle. Please ask Dr. Fenske about nutritional supplements that support sleep.