

Fact Sheet Sleep Hygiene

What is Sleep Hygiene and Why is it Important?

- Sleep hygiene refers to the quality and quantity of sleep and healthy sleeping habits. It is affected by food, drinks, and medications.
- Developing healthy sleeping habits can help someone fall asleep and stay asleep.
- Adequate sleep promotes daytime alertness, helps a person maintain good health, and promotes motor function, learning, and memory.
- Daily behaviors and routines, particularly bedtime routines, influence how well or how poorly one sleeps.

Signs of Poor Sleep Hygiene

- Difficulty falling asleep
- Difficulty staying asleep
- Daytime sleepiness

Sleep Hygiene and Intellectual Disability/Autism (ID/A)

- Individuals with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) commonly experience sleep problems and good sleep hygiene can improve their quality of life.
- Good sleep hygiene techniques are often overlooked in care-planning for people with ID/A.

(Horan et al, 2019)

How to Improve Sleep Hygiene

- Assist the person to establish a regular schedule with set times for going to bed and waking up, aiming for 8 hours of sleep each night.
- Encourage a short nap in the afternoon, if necessary.
- Assist the person to follow a consistent bedtime routine:
 - Teach the person to follow the same steps in the same order every night.
 - For example, put on pajamas, brush teeth, engage in a calming or relaxing activity.
 - Set aside 30 minutes to relax before bedtime, engaging in calming activities the person enjoys, such as looking at a book, gentle stretching exercises, or listening to soothing music or other sounds.
 - Avoid bright lights, including light from electronic devices and televisions 30-60 minutes before bed.
 - Focus on relaxation, rather than falling asleep
 - Foster a positive connection to bedtime; repeat calming techniques in dim lighting if the person does not fall asleep within 20 minutes.
- Keep a sleep diary to track sleep patterns and share it with treating physicians.
- Initiate or increase activities and exercise during the day, well before bedtime.
- Reduce or eliminate caffeine intake, especially several hours before bedtime.
- Eat a light snack or drink a warm beverage before bedtime.
- Ensure that the bedroom is conducive to sleep with a comfortable bed, bedding, room temperature, and level of lighting preferred by the person.
- Assist the individual to make a story or picture book about their bedtime routine.

References:

American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) (2020, August). Sleep Education. Healthy Sleep Habits. Retrieved on May 12, 2023, from <https://sleepeducation.org/healthy-sleep/healthysleep-habits/>

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