

Washington Center for Sleep

sleep better. feel better.

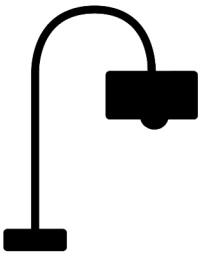
5 Things to Avoid for Better Sleep

Screens



TVs, computers, and mobile devices emit bright blue light. This activates our brain into an awake state. Furthermore, the apps on our phones trigger reward and excitement circuits in our brains. These are all unhelpful things if we are trying to sleep! Try to discontinue all screen time 30-60 minutes before bedtime. Instead, implement a Wind Down Routine to help you calm down and relax to get ready for bed.

Lights at Night



Did you know our brain constantly adjusts its 24-hour clock based on the position of the sun? With the advent of artificial lights in the home, we can actually confuse our brain as to what time it is depending on what type of lights are on and where. Overhead lights mimic the sun being overhead at noon, which can trick your brain into not wanting to sleep. Instead, try keeping lights at or below eye level at night to promote sleepiness. Interestingly enough, candles do not trigger this response at all! So if you really want to induce sleep, use candlelight in the evening...just don't fall asleep with a candle on!

Heavy Meals Before Bed



Slamming a pizza and passing out on the couch is a great pastime...but do you ever get good sleep doing that? Going to bed on a full stomach can be just plain uncomfortable! Sleeping too soon after eating causes acid reflux (heartburn) which is bad for your body and your teeth. Try to avoid eating 2-3 hours before going to bed—and no late night snacks either!

Alcohol/Weed/Nicotine/Caffeine



All the fun stuff actually has a huge negative impact on our sleep. Alcohol and weed are commonly used as sleep aids, but the only thing they actually aid is helping you become unconscious faster. Both create sleep fragmentation and have a negative impact on REM sleep, an important time during sleep when your brain dreams and consolidates memories. Nicotine and coffee are stimulants meaning they promote wakefulness. Try to avoid nicotine 1-2 hours before sleep and coffee 8-10 hours before sleep.

Naps



Throughout the day our body builds up “sleep pressure.” Taking a nap releases the valve on that pressure leaving us staring at the ceiling when we actually want to go to bed. Try to focus on getting better quality sleep. If you have to, try to nap before 3pm and keep it to 20-30 minutes.