

Poor sleep hygiene can lead to chronic sleep loss

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Many of us look forward to staying up late and sleeping in late on weekends and holidays, but experts at National Jewish Health warn that doing so can have a negative impact on healthy sleep and daytime alertness.

"Maintaining a consistent bed time and wake time is very important to sleep hygiene," said Sheila Tsai, MD, sleep expert at National Jewish Health. "The body grows accustomed to a certain bed time and wake time. Altering that on the weekends can throw your system out of whack and you may find it difficult to get back on track during the work week, which can lead to difficulties falling asleep, waking up or daytime sleepiness."

Developing good sleep habits, known as sleep hygiene, can ensure normal, quality sleep. Practicing good sleep hygiene and making sure you allow enough time for sleep helps you avoid chronic sleep loss, which can lead to many serious health problems including high blood pressure and significant weight gain. Chronic [sleep loss](#) can contribute to sleepiness which increases the risk of motor vehicle accidents or errors at home or work.

Dr. Tsai recommends the following sleep routines to help ensure proper [sleep hygiene](#):

• **Establish a regular, relaxing bedtime routine.** Taking part in relaxing activities before bedtime such as yoga or a warm bath can help

relax your mind and body and help you fall asleep.

• **Avoid vices right before bedtime.** Avoid caffeine before bedtime. Caffeine can linger for up to six hours. Also avoid stimulants, nicotine and alcohol before bed.

• **Follow the 20-minute rule.** If it takes more than 20 minutes to fall asleep, get out of bed and read boring material in a dim light. Return to bed again once you feel sleepy. Also if you have problems falling asleep, turn away and don't focus on the alarm clock. Worrying about all the sleep you're losing won't help you fall asleep.

• **Maintain a comfortable and relaxing sleep environment.** Keeping the bedroom dark and the room at a cool temperature will help your body relax and fall asleep.

• **Keep technology out of the bedroom.** TVs, cell phones and computers should be taken out of bedrooms. The bedroom should be reserved as a place for sleep and intimacy only. These devices can engage people and keep them from trying to go to [sleep](#). The light exposure from these devices and/or their stimulating content can also keep people from being able to fall asleep.

Provided by National Jewish Health

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