Wellness Articles

Attached are weekly health and wellness articles provided by Alberta Health Services. As a way to help all Albertans live a healthy life, we welcome and encourage weekly newspapers, community newsletters and other publications to reproduce this information free of charge.

Please credit Alberta Health Services or the identified content provider.

Proposed publication date: Dec. 4, 2023
Content provided by: Alberta Health Services

Sleep Hygiene: what is it and why do you need it?

Sleep profoundly impacts our physical, mental, and emotional well-being, and is just as vital to our health as a balanced diet and exercise.

Sleep hygiene is a term that encompasses a set of practices, habits, or routines that can help you achieve restful, high quality sleep each and every night. By adopting good sleep practices and making them part of your daily routine, you can support your body and mind in functioning at their best.

Why is good Sleep Hygiene important?
Getting a good night's rest can do wonders for pretty much every function in our body. It's important for physical health, aiding in the body's repair and rejuvenation and muscle recovery. Sleep can improve our immune systems and help us fight off illnesses, including infections and viruses. Adequate sleep helps us maintain a healthy weight and good heart health; enhances our ability to think clearly and make sound decisions; and helps us with mood and emotional regulation. We perform better and are more productive.

Ensuring good sleep hygiene can help improve the quality of our sleep and, in turn, helps us achieve a better quality of life!

Improving your sleep hygiene
Here are some practical tips to help you improve your sleep hygiene:

- Create a Consistent Schedule – Anchor your wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends. Consistency, particularly with the time that you wake up, helps regulate your body's internal clock.

- Create a comfortable sleep environment – Ensure your bedroom is conducive to sleep. This means a cool, dark, and quiet room with a comfortable mattress and pillows.

- Limit screen time – The blue light from screens can disrupt your body's natural sleep-wake cycle. Avoid screens at least an hour before bedtime.

- Be mindful of your diet – Avoid heavy or spicy meals, caffeine, and alcohol close to bedtime, as they can interfere with your sleep.

- Exercise regularly – Engaging in physical activity during the day can help you sleep better at night. However, try to finish exercising at least a few hours before bedtime.

- Relaxation techniques – Consider trying relaxation methods in a quiet area of your home such as deep breathing, meditation, or gentle stretches to calm your mind if you find yourself wakeful when you would like to sleep.

- Switch it up! – Try to avoid lying awake in bed if you remain wakeful despite trying to sleep. Sometimes, leaving the bedroom to do something relaxing in a low light environment and returning to bed when sleepy can help to improve sleep continuity.

- Limit Naps – While short power naps can be rejuvenating, long or irregular daytime naps can disrupt your sleep patterns.

Sleep hygiene is a cornerstone of our health and well-being. By adopting good sleep practices and making them a part of your daily routine, you can enjoy the numerous physical, mental, and emotional benefits of a well-rested life. Prioritizing sleep hygiene is an investment in yourself and your future, and it's a simple yet effective way to enhance your quality of life.