

## Developing a sleep hygiene plan

It seemed like this would be an important time of year to address sleep. Many of you are studying hard for finals and other large tests and the anxiety level is high. Often, we can find ourselves having difficulty sleeping just at a time when we need sleep the most to keep our emotional and physical fuel tank from becoming depleted. The data on the role of adequate sleep on mental and physical health including memory consolidation is very strong.

I have been hearing many stories about how some students are lying in bed ruminating about their studying and then tossing and turning. Sometimes the worries get bigger and go beyond a test score to concerns about careers. Some of you describe not being able to fall asleep, while others collapse out of sheer exhaustion to wake up at 3 am and the worries of the world begin flooding your thoughts. That old Imposter Syndrome can also sneak in during the middle of the night.

It is time to consider developing a sleep hygiene plan!!!!

1. Start with getting your thoughts into a helpful place. Try not to panic about sleep as the anxiety about not sleeping interferes with sleep-

Try thoughts like:

"I am working on finding the best sleep plan, and I will not focus on not sleeping"

"I will experiment with different options and see which plan works best."

2. Follow a sleep schedule, with regular bedtime and arising time. Get up at the same hour even if you have not slept well, and avoid daytime naps.
3. Avoid stimulating activities like surfing the internet on your phone, iPad or computer, playing video games, and watching TV late at night. Turn off all devices at least 1-2 hours before sleep.
4. Avoid alcohol and caffeine in the evening
5. Sleep in a room that is totally dark, quiet, and cool

By Dr. Margaret Rea



6. Have a small snack before bedtime if needed, but avoid having a large meal within 2-3 hours of bedtime.
7. Remind yourself that even if you do not sleep well on a particular night, you will still be able to function the next day. Challenge stress inducing thoughts like "I must get 8 hours of sleep."
8. Before bed, write down or file away in a mental filing cabinet any 'to do' list, anxious, or repetitive thoughts. Know that you can return to them the next morning.
9. Do not exercise within 3 hours of bedtime.
10. Use a relaxation technique at bedtime.

The good news is that research supports that the use of short accessible relaxation techniques like mindful body scans can help with sleep (see the links below and the wellness tip). You don't need to spend an hour a day meditating, but can use short mindfulness meditation practices and get relief. Also, you don't need months of practice to get an effect on your sleep quality or duration.

- <http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2110998>
- <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/joop.12115/full>

To learn a relaxation technique- check out the links and YouTube videos below that help with sleep:

- <https://shcs.ucdavis.edu/self-help-library#tab-23>
- <http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>
- <https://www.doyogawithme.com/content/yoga-nidra-sleep>
- <http://www.quietmindcafe.com/into-sleep.html>

## Wellness Events

### "Maintaining Motivation as You Wrap Up the Year."

4/11/17, 8 AM  
Med Ed Building 1222  
Please come for Breakfast and some motivation.  
Dr. Stephen Simonson and Dr. Lindsay Ulrey

### "Create a budget, ditch your debt and start building for the future: manageable strategies and tools that can help get a handle on spending and borrowing"

4/10/17, 12 PM  
Med Ed Bldg 1204, 12 – 1 pm  
Rand Erickson from Fidelity

### "Work Life Balance"

4/17, 12 PM  
Med Ed Bldg 1222  
Dr. Julie Freischlag, Dean and Vice Chancellor

### Living Fit Forever Classes

[http://intranet.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/clinops/resources/living\\_fit\\_forever.shtml](http://intranet.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/clinops/resources/living_fit_forever.shtml)

### Work Life and Wellness Events

[ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/hr/wellness/brownbags.html](http://ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/hr/wellness/brownbags.html)

### UCDMC Yoga

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Gz23GMJbZJDI-wzn9g8NxUnia4IFuVsHah4olav7Ow0/edit#>

# Sleep Relaxation Exercise

This is a sample exercise to help you relax and sleep. Read through this script a few times to get the idea, or you can record your voice (or someone else's voice that you find soothing) reciting this script slowly. It can be very helpful to practice the progressive relaxation at other times of the day when you need to engage the Relaxation Response to stress.

Practice this exercise when you lay down to go to sleep at night, and also if you wake up during the night and have trouble falling back to sleep. This is especially helpful if you find your mind racing or preoccupied, which many people with insomnia do. The idea is to continue to redirect your attention to your breathing and your body any time you find yourself lost in thought. When you let thoughts go and simply keep your attention on your breathing, you are better able to welcome sleep.

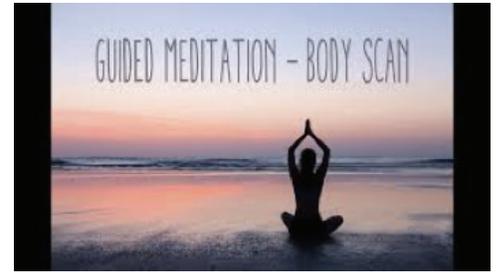
Find a comfortable position in bed. Let yourself relax and start to notice your body and any sensations you feel. Feel the connection between your body and the surface you're lying on.

Focus your attention on your body. If your mind starts to wander to thoughts or worries, gently bring it back to your body. It's very common to become preoccupied while you're lying in bed—it takes time and practice to learn how to focus your attention on the body only. Start to notice your breath and where you feel it in your body. You might

feel it in your abdomen, your chest, or in your nostrils. Focus your attention on the full breath, from start to finish.

If your mind is wandering, just notice that it has wandered and gently redirect it back to your breath. Take a deep breath into your lower belly (not your chest) and feel your abdomen expand with air. Hold this for a few seconds and then release. Notice your belly rising and falling, and the air coming in and out a few times. Imagine the air filling up your abdomen, and then traveling out your airways, over and over. Continue to do this for a few minutes, focusing your mind back to your body and the breath coming in and out. Any time a thought crosses your mind, release that thought and refocus on the breath. Feel yourself relaxing even more deeply. (Practice this silently for a few minutes)

Do a scan of your body while you lay down, noticing anywhere you might feel tension in your body. Review the areas of your body, starting from the top of your head to your toes,



relaxing the tension when you encounter it. As you do this, direct your breath into that area of your body to help you release that tension. After you have scanned your body, return to the simple breathing pattern, continuing to notice your breath and picturing it flowing into and out of your belly. Here is a link to additional script for progressive relaxation.

<http://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/progressive-muscle-relaxation-script.pdf>  
<https://sleepfoundation.org/insomnia/content/relaxation-exercise>

## Monthly Recipe: Chickpeas

I was searching for foods that might contain ingredients that help with sleep and sure enough I landed on chickpeas. Chickpeas boost vitamin B6, which is needed to make melatonin (a sleep-inducing hormone triggered by darkness). Who knew!!!

Even better, Dr. Oliveira, from the UC Davis Department of Integrative Medicine coincidentally included a great recipe that contains chickpeas with a fabulous name- Burton's Bliss in a Dish (Chickpea and Artichoke One-Pot Wonder), "a hearty and satisfying plant-based casserole. The recipe is a combination of all of our favorite wholesome ingredients, including chickpeas, artichokes, potatoes, tomatoes, red bell pepper, garlic, and olives, that are then tossed with a variety of herbs and baked to perfection." <http://ucdintegrativemedicine.com/recipes/bliss-in-a-dish/#gs.2RYjVdA>

## Wellness App: Sleep Pillow and OMG

Sleep Pillow provides an advanced set of high quality ambient sounds, premixed for perfect sleep enhancement. The sounds are recorded and enhanced to relax and make you sleep. They isolate, create a relaxed environment, and put you into a cyclical sleep pattern. The way these sounds are created will induce sleep even for difficult sleepers or in the noisiest environments.

OMG I can meditate is an App that is your personal meditation coach and can help you find the right meditation that works for your sleep issues.