

# HIC HENRY COUNTY MIC MEDICAL CENTER

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## Sleep Hygiene Essential for Health – HCMC Sleep Disorders Center May Be Able to Help

**Paris, TN** – Poor sleep habits (referred to as hygiene) are among the most common problems encountered in our society. We stay up too late and get up too early. We interrupt our sleep with drugs, chemicals and work, and we overstimulate ourselves with late-night activities such as television.

Good “hygiene” is anything that helps you to have a healthy life. The idea behind sleep hygiene is the same as dental hygiene. Dental hygiene helps you stay healthy by keeping your teeth and gums clean and strong. Sleep hygiene helps you stay healthy by keeping your mind and body rested and strong. Following these tips will help you sleep better and feel your best.

Below are some essentials of good sleep habits. Many of these points will seem like common sense. But it is surprising how many of these important points are ignored by many of us.

- ***Fix a bedtime and an awakening time.*** Do not be one of those people who allow bedtime and awakening time to drift. The body "gets used" to falling asleep at a certain time, but only if this is relatively fixed. Even if you are retired or not working, this is an essential component of good sleeping habits.
- ***Avoid napping during the day.*** If you nap throughout the day, it is no wonder that you will not be able to sleep at night. The late afternoon for most people is a "sleepy time." Many people will take a nap at that time. This is generally not a bad thing to do, provided you limit the nap to 30-45 minutes and can sleep well at night.
- ***Avoid alcohol 4-6 hours before bedtime.*** Many people believe that alcohol helps them sleep. While alcohol has an immediate sleep-inducing effect, a few hours later as the alcohol levels in your blood start to fall, there is a stimulant or wake-up effect.
- ***Avoid caffeine 4-6 hours before bedtime.*** This includes caffeinated beverages such as coffee, tea and many sodas, as well as chocolate, so be careful.
- ***Avoid heavy, spicy, or sugary foods 4-6 hours before bedtime.*** These can affect your ability to stay asleep.
- ***Exercise regularly, but not right before bed.*** Regular exercise, particularly in the afternoon, can help deepen sleep. Strenuous exercise within the 2 hours before bedtime, however, can decrease your ability to fall asleep.
- ***Don't go to bed unless you are sleepy.*** If you are not sleepy at bedtime, then do something else. Read a book, listen to soft music or browse through a magazine. Find something relaxing, but not stimulating, to take your mind off of worries about sleep. This will relax your body and distract your mind.

- ***If you are not asleep after 20 minutes, then get out of the bed.*** Find something else to do that will make you feel relaxed. If you can, do this in another room. Your bedroom should be where you go to sleep. It is not a place to go when you are bored. Once you feel sleepy again, go back to bed.

Sleep-related difficulties – typically called sleep disorders – affect many people. Major sleep disorders include:

- **Insomnia** – an inability to fall or stay asleep that can result in functional impairment throughout the day.
- **Narcolepsy** – excessive daytime sleepiness combined with sudden muscle weakness; episodes of narcolepsy are sometimes called "sleep attacks" and may occur in unusual circumstances.
- **Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS)** – an unpleasant "creeping" sensation associated with aches and pains throughout the legs that can make it difficult to fall asleep.
- **Sleep Apnea** – interrupted sleep caused by periodic gasping or "snorting" noises or momentarily suspension of breathing.

The lack of restful sleep can affect your ability to concentrate and may keep you from being able to perform daily tasks. There are treatments for most sleep disorders. If you think you have a sleep disorder, talk to your healthcare provider to discuss being evaluated and referred for a sleep disorders test at our newly expanded Sleep Disorders Center.

Additionally, HCMC offers an online test that you can print and go over with your physician to see if you could use a referral. For more information or to access the online test, go to <http://www.hcmc-tn.org/Services/Sleep-Disorder-Center/Default.aspx>

The Sleep Disorders Center is located on the ground floor of the Henry County Medical Center, next to Cardiac Rehab. The Center is undergoing an expansion from two to four beds to better meet the needs of our patients. If you have any questions about sleep disorders or if you need a sleep study, please contact Tony Fry, RRT at 731-644-8274. If you need to schedule a physician referred test, call 731-644-8486.

Located in Paris, TN, Henry County Medical Center is a progressive, integrated healthcare organization committed to serving the healthcare needs of Henry County and the adjoining region. Including a 142-bed hospital and other facilities, the medical center provides a variety of outpatient services, as well as inpatient care. Henry County Medical Center is a county-owned and operated nonprofit institution. For more information: [www.hcmc-tn.org](http://www.hcmc-tn.org).