



Want to improve your looks, memory, concentration, energy, and productivity? Want to more easily maintain a healthy weight? Want to strengthen your immune system and live happier, healthier, and longer? TRY GETTING AN EXTRA 60-90 MINS OF SLEEP EACH NIGHT!

Do you already sleep eight or more hours a night but still feel tired during the day? Sleep quality is more important than sleep quantity, that is, how well you sleep is more important than the number of hours you sleep. Try the following tips to help you get better, more restorative, sleep.

Tips for Getting Quality Sleep

Make Sleep a Priority. Do not make other plans when you should be sleeping.

Follow a Consistent Sleep Routine. Set a bedtime that is early enough for you to get at least 7 hours of sleep. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day...even on weekends and vacations. Occasionally staying up a few extra hours for a party or to meet a deadline is acceptable as long as you maintain your normal waking hour the next day and use early afternoon naps and/or earlier bedtimes for the next few nights to make up the lost sleep.

Get Some Sunshine during the day. Try 10 mins each day out in the sun without sunglasses.

Add Exercise and/or Gentle Stretching to your Daily Routine. Cardio exercises work best, however, all exercise is helpful. Avoid strenuous exercise for at least 2 hours before bedtime. Exercise is the only proven way for healthy adults to boost the amount of deep sleep they get.

Avoid Caffeine (coffee, tea, cola, energy drinks, etc.) for 8 to 10 hours before bedtime.

Caffeine keeps you awake by blocking adenosine, a brain chemical that helps you fall asleep. For some people, a single cup of coffee in the morning means a sleepless night. If you have insomnia, avoid caffeine as much as possible, since its effects can last for many hours. Because caffeine withdrawal can cause headaches, irritability, and extreme fatigue, some people find it easier to cut back gradually than to go cold turkey. Those who cannot or do not want to give up caffeine should avoid it after noon if they are especially caffeine sensitive.

If You Nap, Keep it Short and Earlier in the Afternoon. Naps should not last more than 30-40 mins or they may disrupt your nighttime sleep. Avoid naps if they keep you from maintaining a consistent bedtime or if you have trouble falling asleep. Relax quietly or meditate instead.

Attend a Stress Management Program if stress interferes with your sleep.

Do not Struggle to Fall Asleep. If you do not fall asleep within 20-30 minutes, get up and do something relaxing in another room. Go back to bed when you feel sleepy.

Revise Habits to Support Sleep. Do not stay up to watch TV; tape shows and watch them later.

Avoid Large Meals Right Before Bedtime. Eat dinner at least 3 hours before sleeping.

Eat a Light Snack if Hungry at Bedtime. Try a banana, whole grain carb, or a glass of milk.

Avoid High Excitement Media and/or Web Surfing 1-2 hours before bedtime. Turn off all electronic devices (computer, TV, video games, bright lights) at least 30 mins before bedtime.

Establish a relaxing bedtime routine. Unwind in the Early Evening. Keep lights low. Limit exposure to bright light in the evenings. Relax. Worrying about a problem or a long to-do list can be a recipe for insomnia. Well before you turn in, try writing down your worries and make a list of tasks you want to remember. This “worry journal” may help move these distracting thoughts from your mind. Closer to bedtime, try comforting rituals that may help lull you to sleep: Listen to soft, calming music, take a warm bath, do some easy stretches or read a book or magazine by soft light.

Avoid Alcohol 2 hours before bedtime. Alcohol suppresses REM sleep so although it may help you fall asleep, you will not sleep well. Alcohol is responsible for up to 10% of chronic insomnia cases. Also, because alcohol relaxes throat muscles and interferes with brain control mechanisms, it can worsen snoring and other nocturnal breathing problems.

Avoid Nicotine 2 hours before bedtime. Nicotine is a potent stimulant that speeds your heart rate, raises your blood pressure, and stimulates fast brain-wave activity that keeps you awake. If you are addicted to nicotine, a few hours without it is enough to induce withdrawal symptoms; the craving can even wake a smoker at night. People who kick the habit fall asleep more quickly and wake less often during the night. Sleep disturbance and daytime fatigue may occur during the initial withdrawal from nicotine. But even during this period, many former users report improvements in sleep. If you continue to use tobacco, avoid smoking or chewing it for at least one to two hours before bedtime.

Use the Bedroom for Two Things Only – Sleep and Sex. Keep computers, televisions, work, exercise and/or study materials out of the bedroom. Ensure that your brain does not associate the bedroom with anything other than sleep and sex. Do not spend time in bed not sleeping. Go to bed only when you are sleepy. If you are unable to sleep, move to another room and do something relaxing. Stay up until you are sleepy, then return to bed. If sleep does not follow quickly, repeat.

Control noise in the Bedroom. A quiet bedroom is especially important for light sleepers and/or older adults. Decorate with heavy curtains and rugs, which absorb sounds. Install double-paned windows. Use earplugs. Use a fan or a sleep machine, which provide “white noise,” or a recording of soothing sounds, such as falling rain or ocean waves.

Dim bright light in the bedroom. Bright light at night can suppress your body’s production of melatonin and make it harder to sleep. Replace bright lights with lower-wattage bulbs or install dimmer switches that allow you to keep the lights low.

Be Comfortable in Bed. Make your bedroom quiet and relaxing. Keep it at a comfortable, cool temperature. Make sure you have plenty of room in bed. Send kids or pets to their own beds. Wear nonrestrictive clothing. Invest in a mattress and bedding that is comfortable for you.

Keep the Bedroom Dark for Sleep. Make sure there are no lights that you can see from bed during the night (ex. LED charger lights, screen lights, LED clock display)

Do not Watch the Clock While in Bed. Do not think about the sleep you may be losing. Turn the clock around so you do not keep checking it.

See your Doctor if Pain Keeps You Awake.

Ask your Doctor and Pharmacist if any Medication You Take May be Affecting your Sleep.

This applies for prescription or over-the-counter medications.

Do not Rely on Sleeping Pills. Try these tips first. If you use sleeping pills, talk to your health care provider about it and consider other options. If sleep pills are necessary, take them for the shortest amount of time needed.

Keep a sleep diary if you need help identifying what may be disturbing your sleep.

you may realize that certain habits (like what you eat or drink or when you exercise) are affecting your slumber. To keep a sleep diary, note what time you went to bed and woke up every day for at least 2 weeks. Include entries for time and quantity of medications and caffeine or alcohol consumption, when and how long you exercised, what time you stopped looking at any electronic devices or TV, and any stresses you encountered during the day. All of these can affect sleep. Also note how well you slept each night, whether you awakened during the night, and, if so, for how long.

Contact your Health Care Provider if You Continue to have Sleep Difficulties after Trying These Tips.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends seeking medical advice if sleep deprivation has compromised your daytime functioning for more than a month. Do not hesitate to ask for help when you are sleeping badly following a death in the family or other stressful event. A physician may suggest the short-term use of a sedative to help you sleep at night. This may help you cope better during the day and prevent the development of a long-term sleep disorder.

Resources for More Information

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF SLEEP MEDICINE

www.sleepeducation.org

Dedicated to the advancement of sleep medicine and related research, this organization also maintains the Sleep Education website to provide the public with information on sleep disorders as well as contact information for accredited sleep centers.

AMERICAN SLEEP APNEA ASSOCIATION

www.sleepapnea.org

This nonprofit organization provides information on sleep apnea via brochures, a newsletter, and videos. It also operates a network of support groups throughout the country.

NARCOLEPSY NETWORK

www.narcolepsynetwork.org

Offers educational materials on narcolepsy, as well as help in finding support groups.

NATIONAL CENTER ON SLEEP DISORDERS RESEARCH

<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/divisions/division-lung-diseases/national-center-sleep-disorders-research>

This Center of the National Institutes of Health coordinates government-supported sleep research, training, and education. It offers a number of free publications about sleep disorders.

NATIONAL SLEEP FOUNDATION

www.sleepfoundation.org

This nonprofit foundation helps consumers locate sleep centers and provides information on a variety of sleep topics.

RESTLESS LEGS SYNDROME FOUNDATION INC.

www.rls.org

This nonprofit foundation distributes brochures and provides information on restless legs syndrome. It also maintains a list of support groups located throughout the country.



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