

# Time to take your sleep seriously

If you are experiencing difficulty sleeping, either occasionally or most nights, here are some strategies for a better night's rest.

## Tune into your body's natural sleep cycle

- If you are having trouble with sleep, try creating a sleep diary for about two weeks to understand your routine.
- Go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day of the week. Be sure this allows you time for at least 7 hours of sleep.
- Don't nap. However, if you find that this is unavoidable, limit your nap to 15-20 minutes.
- Get some exercise each day, but avoid strenuous activity for three hours before bedtime.
- Get plenty of light when you wake up and throughout your day and avoid bright light as you approach your bedtime.
- Spend as much time as possible outdoors on sunny days.
- Keep window coverings open to let the sun shine in during the day.
- Don't work or do other stimulating activities in the bedroom. Reserve this area for sleep and intimacy.
- If you are sensitive to caffeine, limit your intake to the early part of your day.
- Try not to go to bed too far in advance of your regular sleep time.



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## Avoid sabotaging yourself

- Make sure your room is cool, dark and well ventilated when it's time for bed.
- Avoid bright lights and screens (TV, laptop, cell phone) at least 30 minutes before your bedtime.
- Create and maintain a peaceful, calming bedtime routine.
- Don't eat or drink large quantities three hours before bedtime.
- Avoid spicy food in the evening and don't go to bed too hungry or too full.
- Clear your mind, write down your idea or thought, knowing that you won't forget it and will be able to address it when you wake.
- Don't try too hard to sleep; instead think pleasant, relaxing thoughts and focus on relaxing your body.
- Take a warm bath before bedtime and try a few easy stretches to help you relax.
- Make sure your mattress, linens and pillows are comfortable for you.
- Look at your sleep diary and make note of your routine when you did and did not sleep well. Use this tool to help you plan a night's rest.
- If you have tried these tips and are still struggling with your sleep, see your doctor.

## Things that disrupt sleep

**Smoking** – Nicotine is a stimulant and may interfere with your ability to sleep.

**Caffeine** – For some people, caffeinated beverages and food (chocolate) can make it difficult to fall asleep. It can take as much as 10-12 hours for caffeine to be eliminated from your body.

**Alcohol** – Don't consume alcoholic beverages in the evening. Alcohol may disrupt your sleep cycle by causing you to wake up during the night.

**Spicy or Acidic Foods** – These types of food can cause stomach distress, making it difficult to get good sleep.

**Sugary Foods or Refined Carbs** – Excess amounts of sweets or refined carbs, such as white bread, rice or pasta, can also cause wakefulness during the night.

\*\* Not everyone works a regular (8-5) daytime schedule. The important thing is to adapt these changes to your daily lifestyle.

## Sources

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

#### *Sleep Hygiene Tips*

([https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/about\\_sleep/sleep\\_hygiene.html](https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/about_sleep/sleep_hygiene.html))

### HelpGuide.org

#### *Sleeping Well – How to Create Habits that Help you Sleep Better?*

(<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/sleep/how-to-sleep-better.htm>)

### *Insomnia Causes and Cures*

(<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/sleep/cant-sleep-insomnia-treatment.htm>)



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# How much sleep do you need?

## Recommendations for the whole family



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We all need sleep to live healthy, productive lives. But the amount of sleep our bodies need changes over time. Infants and small children need the most sleep to support healthy growth, while older adults require fewer hours. Below are the National Sleep Foundation's guidelines for how much sleep we need at each stage of life:

**35%**  
of Americans  
report the quality  
of their sleep as  
poor or fair.

As we age, the amount of sleep we need decreases.

**Newborns**  
**0 - 3 months**  
14-17 hours

**Infants**  
**4 - 11 months**  
12-15 hours

**Toddlers**  
**1 - 2 years**  
11-14 hours

**Preschoolers**  
**3 - 5 years**  
10-13 hours

**School age**  
**6 - 13 years**  
9-11 hours

**Pre-teens**  
8-10 hours

**Teens**  
8-10 hours

**Adults**  
7-9 hours

**Adults over 65**  
7 hours

