

Healthy Sleep Tips

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Relax well, sleep well, live well.



SLEEP HABITS

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then,
is not an act, but a habit.”

Aristotle

Develop a regular sleep-wake schedule.

- o Go to sleep and get up at the same time every day (including weekends).
 - o This helps set your internal body clock and increases the quality of your sleep.
- o If you nap, nap smart (i.e., only nap for 20 minutes in the afternoon). If you have trouble falling asleep at night, restrict daytime napping or only nap before 3:00pm.
- o Do not fall asleep on the couch in front of the TV or any place other than your bed. Get into bed *before* you start to get drowsy.

Make sure you are getting enough sunlight during the day.

The increase in melatonin you get from sunlight helps regulate your sleep/wake cycle and it increases your metabolism of serotonin.

- o Serotonin is the neurotransmitter that helps elevate your mood. Getting enough sunlight during the day not only helps you fall asleep at night but it helps elevate your mood during the day.

Avoid looking at any screens that emit blue light (e.g., TV screens, computers, phones, tablets) for at least an hour before bed (see more on blue light below). The light from screens stimulates cortisol and suppresses melatonin production.

Exercise vigorously during the day. If you can not get a serious sweat session in during the day, even a 10 minute walk around the block will support falling asleep at night.

- o Do not exercise vigorously close to bed time as this may stimulate your system and make it more difficult to fall asleep.
- o Research suggests that the positive sleep effects of consistent physical activity can take several weeks to become noticeable.

Avoid big meals late at night (at least two hours before bed time) and stay away from rich foods that are hard to digest. However, make sure you eat dinner, as low blood-sugar can also inhibit sleep.

- o Make sure you avoid chocolate after dinner. Chocolate, like coffee, can be quite stimulating and may keep some people awake.

Keep your bed for sleep, reading and sex ONLY. You want to associate your bed with sleep and relaxation and not with anything stressful.

- o no television
- o no laptop
- o no "relationship talks"

Avoid caffeine after 2pm. However, some people are more sensitive to the effects of caffeine than others, so if you have anxiety or insomnia, consider cutting caffeine out all together.

- Caffeine is a stimulant and works by blocking your production of adenosine (a neurotransmitter that helps your body feel sleepy).
- Caffeine, even in small amounts, can significantly impair your ability to fall asleep.
- Caffeine has an approximate 6 hour half life. Meaning that if you have a cup of coffee at 2pm, you still have half the amount of caffeine that you consumed in your system at 8pm.

Avoid nicotine before bedtime. Nicotine is a stimulant and can inhibit sleep for some people.

Avoid alcohol after dinner and before bed. While small amounts of alcohol can help people get tired and fall asleep, as alcohol is metabolized, sleep becomes disturbed and fragmented. Alcohol is a poor sleep aid and can reduce the quality of your sleep.

ENVIRONMENT

“Environment is stronger than will power.”

Pramahansa Yogananda

Keep your bedroom as dark as possible and limit your exposure to light in the evening. Light from lamps and light from screens (i.e., television, phones, tablets, etc.) is stimulating to your nervous system.

- o Blue light emitted by your phone, laptop, TV, tablets etc., will inhibit melatonin production and potentially make it difficult to fall asleep. You can minimize the effect of this light by using glasses that block blue-light, turning the brightness down, setting “night mode” on your iPhone, and using software such as f.lux on your laptop. Light from street lights, LED lights and other sources of light can also make it more difficult to fall asleep
- o Avoid bright screens within two hours of your bedtime (or use your blue- light glasses if you absolutely have to be looking at screens)
- o Use black-out curtains
- o Cover LEDs, clocks and anything else emitting light in the bedroom
- o Use an eye-mask to block out as much light as possible

Keep out as much noise as possible.

- o Use ear plugs or use white noise generators (e.g., apps, white noise machine or a fan) if there are noises that are distracting you and keeping you awake.

Make the temperature comfortable for you. Research suggests that people sleep better when the temperature is slightly cool; between 60–70 degrees Fahrenheit, is reported to be the best range for most people.

Have a note-pad by your bed. If tasks and ideas keep popping into your head as you are trying to fall asleep, write them down, so you can let those thoughts go.

MINDSET

“Nothing is more active than thought, for it travels over the universe.”

Thales, Greek philosopher

Shift your focus from ‘trying to fall asleep’ to ‘resting’. Trying to fall asleep can make you more anxious and less likely to fall asleep.

Do not stay in bed struggling with sleep. If you are unable to fall asleep within a reasonable timeframe (somewhere from 15 to 30 minutes), try a guided meditation with your focus on resting or get out of bed, go read a novel, and return to bed when you are sleepy.

About an hour before bedtime, begin to “wind down”. Turn off overhead lights, listen to calming music, turn off technology and generally slow down. Winding down is a mindset as much as a behavioral practice. Winding down can support your body in preparing for sleep creating a smooth transition from your waking state to a deep sleep.

As part of the winding down ritual, include a **gratitude practice**. This can create a relaxed mindset as you get into bed. The gratitude practice can be as simple as acknowledging three things you are grateful for as you get into bed.

Creative visualization. Some people are visually orientated, and for them, using an image of a peaceful place and imagining themselves there, can help prepare their body for sleep.

Guided meditation for sleep. Using the Ease Into Sleep guided meditations with the binaural beats is a great way to train your system to ease into a deep and restful sleep.

EXTRA HELP

“I get by with a little help from my friends.” The Beatles

Acupuncture. Many people report that acupuncture has helped them with getting to sleep.

Flux software for laptops - to block the harmful blue rays emitted from screens. <https://justgetflux.com/>

Blue-light blocking glasses - can help offset some of the harmful blue rays emitted from screens.

Supplements. While I recommend working with an acupuncturist or naturopath to determine what supplements work best for your constitution, here are a few common supplements for sleep.

Melatonin - over the counter supplement in the U.S. Melatonin is indicated for jet lag, however should not be used on an ongoing sleep aid.

Valerian - a sedative herb that you can find in health food stores and pharmacies.

CBD oil - a non-psychoactive oil derived from the cannabis plant, is emerging as a beneficial sleep-aid. Be mindful when ordering CBD oil, as it may be illegal in your state or country.

Guided meditations: YouTube <https://bit.ly/2ILFMsl> or Spotify <https://spoti.fi/2V0NKVm> or www.goinmeditations.com