

How to Get a Great Night's Sleep



Do you have trouble falling asleep? Do you often wake in the middle of the night? Or do you wake early and then can't get back to sleep? If so, you're not alone. Most people have trouble sleeping at some time in their life. Below are some tried-and-true ways to help you get the rest you need:

- ◆ **Stay on a regular schedule.** Set up a routine so you get 7 to 8 hours of sleep. Get up at the same time each day — even if you have to force yourself. Stay up until bedtime — even if you are sleepy earlier.
- ◆ **Don't nap.** Stay awake during the day, no matter how tired you may feel.
- ◆ **Do whatever you can to be comfortable.** Replace a mattress that sags. Rotate it or flip it monthly to extend its life. Are you too hot or too cold? Remove or add blankets. Does light bother you? Use thicker curtains or move your bed. Put a scarf or sleep mask over your eyes. Too much noise? Use earplugs. Ask neighbors to be quieter. Perhaps a different room would provide more comfortable sleep.
- ◆ **Avoid stimulants, including alcohol, after 4 p.m.** Coffee, tea, alcohol, nicotine, cola drinks, and appetite suppressants all disrupt sleep.
- ◆ **Be active every day.** Walking and other exercise has been shown to improve sleep.
- ◆ **Relax for an hour before bedtime.** Avoid TV, alcohol, exercise, and arguments. Do some light reading. Stretch or do yoga. Take a warm bath.
- ◆ **Use your bed for only two things — sleep and sex.** Don't work, watch TV, eat, or make phone calls in bed.
- ◆ **Don't lie in bed awake.** Get out of bed if you can't sleep after 30 minutes. Sit in a chair and read. Or do something else to relax. Don't eat, drink, or smoke. Only go back to bed when you're sleepy again.
- ◆ **Worried? Write down what's on your mind.** Set it aside, and forget about it. Turn negative thoughts into positive ones, such as "I can get to sleep."

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- ◆ **Reduce overall stress in your life.** Change what you can change. Accept what you can't. Practice relaxation skills, such as deep breathing, often. Practice them as you fall asleep.
- ◆ **Be wary of sleeping pills.** Use them only as a last resort. And get your doctor's okay first. Over time, you may need more of them to get the same effect. Also, they may mask the source of your trouble sleeping.

Keep in mind that sleep problems may be a sign of depression. Other signs are loss of interest, energy, and appetite. If you think you may be depressed, talk with a doctor.

Take action

Check one or more of the tips above that you are willing to try now.

Use your benefit

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