



Tips for a better night's sleep

Sleep is as vital for life as food or water. Getting a good night's sleep can have a huge impact on your quality of life. The amount of sleep needed is different for everybody but generally adults need 7-8 hours per night. A good indication that you've had enough sleep is if you wake feeling refreshed, waking just before the alarm or not needing an alarm.

Here are some tips to get a better night's sleep

- Try to go to bed and wake up the same time every day, including weekends. This is possibly the most important sleep habit and will help regulate your body clock so your body is prepared to sleep when you are! Don't ignore tiredness. Go to bed when your body tells you it's ready.
- Have a relaxing routine in the hour before going to bed. Some examples are: taking a warm bath, reading a book, listening to quiet music or practising mindfulness.
- Turn off all screens (e.g. TVs, computers, smartphones) 2-3 hours before bed and if possible, do not have them in the bedroom.

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- Limit daytime naps to 15-30 minutes and not too close to bedtime. Early in the afternoon is best.
- Regular exercise can also promote good sleep. Try to get 20-30 mins a day, 3 days a week and, again, not too close to bedtime.
- Try to get a dose of sunlight during the day. This will help maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle.
- Use the bedroom for sleeping and intimacy only. Avoid reading or watching TV in bed. If you are unable to fall asleep - move to another room and do something relaxing, then return to bed when you're sleepy.
- Create a pleasant sleeping environment. The mattress and pillows should be comfortable. Make sure the room you're sleeping in is cool, ideally around 19 degrees, as well as dark and quiet. Consider using blackout curtains, ear plugs, fans or other devices to make the bedroom more relaxing and turn your alarm clock away from you, so that you cannot see the time.
- Limit your use of sleeping pills and speak to your doctor if pain or medications are affecting your sleep.
- Avoid caffeine and big meals too late in the day. Warm milk might help sleep but try to minimize drinking an hour and a half before bed to avoid needing to get up while you're falling asleep.
- Don't drink alcohol or smoke to help you sleep. Alcohol can disrupt sleep patterns, making it harder to stay asleep and nicotine is a stimulant that can keep you awake for longer.
- If there are things worrying you, write them down to avoid thinking about them all night. If you are feeling stressed or anxious, try mindfulness and relaxation exercises.
- If you are worried about something disrupting your sleep have a chat to your doctor.

You can also check out some of the other videos in the Be healthy and active program for tips on nutrition, stress and mindfulness.