



Tips for Improving Sleep

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Develop a pre-bedtime ritual. To help your body shift into sleep mode, establish a regular nightly routine. Lay out your pajamas, brush your teeth, take a warm bath, have a warm glass of milk or cup of chamomile tea, read a book, or listen to soft music. Avoid activities before bedtime that cause stress or anxiety, which can make it more difficult to fall asleep.

Maintain a regular sleep schedule. Go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day, even on weekends. If you're unable to fall asleep or go back to sleep after 20 minutes, don't lie in bed and think about how much sleep you're missing. Leave the bedroom and return when drowsy. If you need to nap during the day, limit naps to 30 minutes or less and do not nap after 3 p.m.

Use your bedroom for sleeping. Go to another room to read, watch television, eat, and work.

Create a sleep-conducive environment. Keep your bedroom cool, well-ventilated, dark, and quiet. Sleep on a comfortable mattress with clean, dry, wrinkle-free sheets neatly tucked in, adequate bedcovers for warmth, and pillows for support. Wear loose, soft clothing to bed. Adjust the temperature in your bedroom to your personal comfort.

Remove distractions from your bedroom. Keep your bedroom door closed to guard against distractions or noise from housemates or pets. Try using blackout curtains, eye shades, sleep masks, ear plugs, a white noise machine, humidifier, fan, etc. Move your clock out of sight to avoid looking at it during the night, which can heighten anxiety and worsen insomnia.

Modify your diet. Avoid stimulants such as caffeine (e.g. coffee, tea, cola, chocolate) and alcohol for four to six hours before bedtime. Avoid heavy, spicy, or sugary foods late in the day. Instead, try a light snack two hours before bedtime, such as milk or turkey, which tend to promote sleep. Also, restrict fluids before bedtime to avoid waking up frequently to use the bathroom.

Exercise regularly. Regular exercise can make it easier to fall asleep and help you sleep more soundly. Exercise may include as little as a 20-minute walk three times a week, depending on your doctor's recommendations. Also, gentle stretching each day may help to relieve muscle tension, which can contribute to sleep impairment. Avoid exercising at least three hours before bedtime.

Try to relax before bedtime. Sit in a dimly lit room before getting ready for bed. Avoid doing stressful or challenging activities in the evening.

Take your medications as directed. Review all of your prescription and nonprescription medications with your doctor. Avoid taking medications right before bedtime that may keep you awake. Let your doctor know if you can't sleep because you are in pain, you feel anxious at night, or if you have recurrent nightmares.

Keep a sleep diary. Record your sleep and sleep-related activities (e.g., the amount of sleep, the quality of sleep, the number of awakenings throughout the night) in a sleep diary. If you have problems with racing thoughts at bedtime, write down your worries/concerns and how you may address them. Share this information with your doctor.

Manage stress during the day. Try different ways to reduce stress and tension during the daytime, such as relaxation, deep breathing, stretching, journaling, drawing, and music. Tell your doctor about other medical symptoms, such as pain, depression, anxiety, and fatigue, which can contribute to sleep difficulties and vice versa. It may also help to join a support group or to seek professional counseling.

*This information is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical guidance.
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