

Tips for a Better Night of Sleep

In the Morning:

✔ Get out of bed and expose yourself to bright light at a regular time both on weekdays, weekends and holidays. Be careful not to do this too early.

During the Daytime:

✔ Avoid coffee, tea, cola or other caffeinated beverages after about noon. Also avoid sugary foods late in the day.

✔ Try not to nap. If you do, restrict this to about an hour per day, and do it relatively early (before about 4 in the afternoon). A brisk walk may help to wake you up.

✔ Exercise, particularly aerobic exercise, is good for both sleep and overall health and should be encouraged. Avoid vigorous exercise at night and consider yoga or pilates or meditative practices

✔ If you drink alcohol, limit this to 1-2 drinks per day and do not drink immediately before bedtime. Although you may find this relaxing, alcohol actually can interfere with sleep later in the night.

✔ If you smoke, avoid this in the hour or two before bedtime. Nicotine patches should be placed in the morning.

✔ Change your passwords to address your worries: phrases about relaxing or that you will sleep better may help improve your outlook unconsciously

Before Bedtime:

✔ Go to sleep at about the same time each night, and awaken at the same time each morning. Wide fluctuations between workdays and days off can further impair your sleep.

✔ Do not eat a heavy meal just before bedtime, although a light snack might help induce drowsiness

✔ Perform relaxing activities in the hour before bedtime

✔ Avoid doing stimulating, frustrating, or anxiety provoking activities before bedtime (stressful work, watching an exciting movie).

✔ Avoid heavy exercise in the evening (do this at least 5 hours before bedtime)

✔ Avoid monitors / electronic screens (e-readers, mobile devices, television sets) 2 hours before bed. The light from the device can signal to your body clock that it is still daytime. Use blue light filters and/or blue blocking glasses in the evening if you must use electronics.

✔ A warm bath 90 minutes prior to bed may help

✔ If you are not sleepy, either don't go to bed. Do quiet, relaxing activities until you feel sleep, then enter the bedroom.

✔ Let your brain decompress for 1 hour before bed. Journalling the day or writing lists of things to do tomorrow.

In the Bedroom:

✔ Avoid doing stimulating, frustrating, or anxiety provoking activities in the bed or in the bedroom (watching television, studying, balancing the checkbook, etc). Try to reserve the bedroom and especially the bed, for sleep and sexual activity.

✔ Sometimes a mantra before bed can help, repeat "If I don't sleep tonight I will sleep better tomorrow or the night after"

✔ Make sure your sleeping environment is as comfortable as possible, paying attention to temperature, noise, and light. Quiet. Dark. Cool.

✔ Consider a white noise machine to block out noises that disrupt you – there are apps for smart phones that can be used. Ear plugs may also help

✔ Use an eye mask and thick curtains to avoid light entering the room particularly early in the morning

- ✓ Use dimmed lights or filtered lights without blue wavelengths
- ✓ Remove the clocks. This isn't going to help you sleep. An alarm can be set but the time should not be visible.

During the Night:

- ✓ Avoid eating during the night as this can signal to the body to wake up
- ✓ Avoid checking electronics during the nighttime which can interfere with your internal body clock
- ✓ If you awaken and cannot return to sleep, leave the bedroom and do quiet, relaxing activities in dim light until you are drowsy. Then return to bed

Myths and Falsehoods:

- ✓ Alcohol – frequent use will cause you to have difficulty falling asleep, remaining asleep and cause you to wake up earlier than you want
- ✓ Going to bed early – will make your brain associate the bed with wakefulness. If you prolong your sleep it may become fragmented resulting in more awakenings at night
- ✓ Never sleeping well again – everyone has bouts of sleeplessness, remember that you slept before and you will sleep again
- ✓ Catching up on sleep – you will never recoup those lost hours of sleep during the week. Ensure you get a regular amount of sleep every night
- ✓ Less sleep as you grow older – once you hit late your early 20s your sleep requirement remains the same for the rest of your life; it is just harder for you to stay up later and to remain asleep during the night
- ✓ You need X hours of sleep – generally speaking the average amount of sleep need is 7.5-8 hours per night but everyone is different. The goal of sleep should be allowing you to function during the daytime – do not obsess over the quantity but quality of your sleep

Resources:

- ✓ www.shuti.me
Online program to help improve sleep for those with insomnia
- ✓ www.sleepio.com
Online program to help improve sleep for those with insomnia
- ✓ <http://www.clevelandclinicwellness.com/Programs/Pages/Sleep.aspx>
Online program to help improve sleep for those with insomnia
- ✓ www.justgetflux.com
Software that removes blue light from the computer screen
- ✓ www.lowbluelights.com
A company specializing in reducing blue light with equipment such as glasses and computer screen filters
- ✓ www.sunbox.com
A company specializing in lightboxes
- ✓ www.northernlighttechnologies.com
A company specializing in lightboxes