

Tips for Better Sleep

Having trouble getting a good night's sleep?
Try these suggestions for improved sleep hygiene.

- Only use your bed for sleeping (and sex). Limit the time you spend in bed while awake.
- Get regular exercise and schedule this at least 3 to 4 hours prior to going bed.
- Turn lights down an hour before bedtime.
- Develop a standardized bedtime routine: rest, read, or listen to calming music.
- Try yoga, prayer, meditation, or other relaxation techniques.
- Keep the bedroom cool; lower temperatures trigger the body to sleep.
- Keep the bedroom dark and quiet. If light is a problem, try a sleeping mask. If noise is a problem, try earplugs, a fan, or a "white noise" machine to cover up sounds.
- Try placing a cotton ball with a few drops of a calming and relaxing essential oil, such as Roman chamomile oil or Lavender oil, by your bedside, or use a bed linen spray.
- Recognize internal cues for sleepiness (e.g.yawning).
- Keep a consistent sleep schedule, going to bed and waking up at the same time each morning, even on weekends. Get up at the same time regardless of the amount of sleep you get.
- If you can't fall asleep and don't feel drowsy, get up and read or do something that is not overly stimulating until you feel sleepy. Avoid using devices with a screen.
- Don't watch the clock—turn it or cover it with a cloth if you need to. Determine that you won't wake up until your alarm goes off. If you do wake early, go into another room and read or listen to music until you feel drowsy. Don't lay in bed awake.
- Sleep only in the bedroom, not elsewhere in the house.
- Go outside after waking up to get some natural sunlight. (Outdoor light is powerful in resetting circadian rhythm.)
- If worries keep you awake, earlier in the day make a list of what you are worried about and what you plan to do about it.



Over for more ideas.

What to Avoid:

- Screens (television, computer, ipad, etc.) an hour before bedtime. If you must use them, BluBlocker sunglasses can reduce the effect. If you use an e-reader, put the light on low.
- Caffeine, tobacco, and other stimulants. The effects of these can last up to 8 hours. Alcohol may make it easier to fall asleep, but it triggers sleep that is lighter than normal and increases the likelihood that you will wake during the night.
- Eating heavy meals late in the day or liquids close to bedtime. A light snack before bedtime may help you sleep, however.
- Napping during the day.

Other Things to Remember:

- Insomnia does not equal sleep deprivation. It is okay to not feel restored every morning or to wake up occasionally. People can have a poor night's sleep and still function well.
- Consider possible medical causes for sleeplessness, such as difficulty breathing, pain, restless legs, or sleep apnea.
- Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy can help by addressing worrisome thoughts and developing a sleep schedule.
- There are several prescription medications used to treat insomnia; talk with your doctor if you feel one would be helpful. There are also over-the-counter products, such as melatonin, which may help with sleep. "Natural" products are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, however, and how well they work and how safe they are isn't well understood. Some OTC products contain antihistamines which may help with sleep. Talk with your doctor before using these as antihistamines may pose a risk for some people.

