

30+ Tips for Longer & More Restful SLEEP

During the day

Spare the snooze button in the morning. – Consistency is important in establishing a regular sleep cycle. Get out of bed at the same time everyday, even on weekends.

Skip the siesta. – A daytime nap may be helpful for individuals who do not get the opportunity to get sufficient sleep at night. But if you have the time for a full night of rest, and just can't seem to get it, it is usually better to consolidate your sleep time.

Exercise. – Try to work a half hour of physical activity into your daily schedule. However, watch the timing: Vigorous activity in the evening may cause sleep problems. The ideal time for exercise is late afternoon.

Avoid caffeine. – Some experts suggest staying away from coffee, tea, chocolate and other sources of caffeine for as long as 6 hours before retiring.

Stop smoking, or at least cut back at night. – In addition to its other adverse health effects, nicotine can affect a person's ability to fall asleep or enjoy deep sleep.

Know what medicines you're taking. – Sleeplessness is an often-overlooked side effect of numerous prescription and over-the-counter medications. Ask your physician or pharmacist about this possibility.

Work a steady shift, if you can. – Frequent work-schedule changes can interfere with a regular sleep pattern.

Resolve dilemmas. – If worries keep you awake at night, set aside a period before bedtime – perhaps during your work commute or just after dinner – to mentally tie up loose ends and set priorities for the next day.

Get to know your neighbors. – If you live in an apartment or condo, your neighbors may be more considerate about lowering their noise volume if they know you work nights or have trouble sleeping.

Evaluate your bedding – If your bed is too small or your mattress or pillows are uncomfortable, they could be preventing a good night's sleep.

Just before retiring

Establish a soothing bedtime routine. – Set aside a half hour before bedtime in which you can “unwind” by reading a pleasant book, listening to soothing music or otherwise gradually easing from activity into bedtime.

Explore relaxation techniques. – Meditation, yoga, and other relaxation techniques can help some people reduce anxiety and decrease muscle tension.

Watch the food. – A light bedtime snack is fine, but avoid heavy, spicy, or high-sugar foods.

Restrict the liquids. – Fluids are good for the body, but too much right before bed make it more likely that biological needs will wake you.

Nix the nightcap. – Although an evening cognac or glass of wine may relax you, alcoholic drinks may actually cause you to wake up more frequently during the night.

Try a glass of warm milk. – Foods such as bananas and milk contain the amino acid tryptophan, which may help you sleep.

Take a bath. – A soak in a warm tub is often very relaxing.

Use your bed for sleep and sex only. – Don't watch TV. Don't do homework. Don't even read for pleasure. It's important that your mental associations with bed send clear signals to your body.

Set a strict bedtime. – What works for children can work for adults. Having a regular bedtime can help your body become "programmed" to sleep at a certain time.

Control your climate. – A room that is too hot or cold can keep you awake.

Block the noise. – The quiet hum of a fan or the soothing monotony of a "nature" tape – such as the sound of waves on a beach – can do wonders to block our distracting noises.

Cut the light. – If you work the night shift and must sleep during the daylight hours, consider buying some room-darkening shades. A thick quilt or towel can also block window light.

Once in bed

Stop working. – Now is not the time to dream up an advertising slogan or make stock-buying decisions. If a stressful thought enters your mind, let it drift away. If that doesn't work, get up and write it down so you can "put it aside" until the next day.

Consider whether to have sex. – Sex generally can help you fall asleep.

Get into position. – Lie in the position that you normally wake up in. Most people have a favorite sleep position and a favorite side of the bed.

If you're not sleepy, get up. – If you find that you're wide awake once your head hits the pillow, or if you just can't seem to relax, don't stay in bed. Get up and involve yourself in a mundane activity until you feel sleepy.

Don't be a clock watcher. – Sometimes a bedside clock can cause anxiety by reminding you that it's late and you're still awake. If your clock has an illuminated dial, turn it around so it's not facing your bed.

Fight heartburn with gravity. – By using extra pillows or elevating the head of your bed on blocks, you can reduce nighttime awakenings caused by heartburn.

Finally

Schedule a "peace accord" with your spouse or roommate. – Problems can occur if you have a roommate who snores loudly, or who arrives home late and awakens you. And, if you've had an argument during the day, try to resolve it before going to bed.

Relax. – You can take comfort in knowing that most sleep problems are temporary and that numerous options are available to treat a sleep problem that persists.

Talk to your doctor. – These suggestions will help many individuals, but not everyone. You may also need quicker relief from sleeplessness than changes in bedtime habits can provide. And, finally, there may be an underlying cause of your insomnia that could endanger your health. *If you have difficulty sleeping, talk to your physician.*