

A Good Night's Sleep

The Hidden Key to Wellness

How Much Is Enough? Medical experts suggest 6-8 hours for adults and up to 10 hours for children and adolescents. According to the National Sleep Foundation, one in three adults get six hours of sleep or less. How do you know if you're getting enough sleep? Listen to your body. Falling asleep at a symphony or at the movies isn't necessarily a sign that the event is boring. It's a sign that you're not getting enough sleep.



Don't Skip Sleep. With increasing activities, many people stay awake into the early hours of the morning. Most people think that sleep is easy to give up. They don't realize the negative effects that cutting down on sleep can have. In addition to feeling sleepy during the day, lack of sleep can cause memory and concentration problems, slower reflexes, and difficulty getting along with others.

Avoid caffeine for six hours and alcohol and nicotine for two to three hours before bedtime.

Don't exercise too close to your bedtime. It is best if you finish exercising at least four hours before bedtime. Exercise raises your body's temperature, which can prevent or delay sleep. In the evening your body temperature naturally drops, which triggers a sleepy feeling.

Control your exposure to light.



Darkness is a cue for your body to sleep. Use night-lights if you need to go to the bathroom or if you often wake up during the night. Bright lights can interrupt the body's natural sleep pattern.

Wake up at the same time every day. Your body will respond well to a consistent cycle.

Track your sleep. Keep track of your sleep habits on a Sleep Log to see what you are doing right and where you can improve.



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Eat a light nighttime snack. A light snack before bedtime can keep hunger pangs from waking you up. Avoid processed sugars that will spike your blood sugar and increase your energy level.



Eat almonds. These nuts contain magnesium, a natural muscle relaxant that can help promote relaxation in the body and help you get some quality sleep.

Eat/drink cherries. A glass of cherry juice may be an effective way to fall asleep faster, says a team of researchers from the University of Pennsylvania. In their study, they found that tart cherries naturally boosted the body's supply of melatonin, which helped people with insomnia.

Sip on miso soup. Miso contains amino acids that may boost the production of melatonin, a natural hormone that can help induce the yawns.

Skip the burger and fries. Research shows that people who often eat high-fat foods not only gain weight, but also experience a disruption with their sleep cycles. A heavy meal activates digestion, which can lead to nighttime trips to the bathroom, or a feeling of heaviness when you awake.

Clear your mind of the day's stress. Try making lists to help clear your mind. That way, when you get into bed, you will be able to focus on dozing, not doing.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation. This will help your body fully relax before bedtime. To get started, follow these steps:

1. Lay down in your bed when you are ready to sleep.
2. Close your eyes and let your body go loose.
3. Take 4 to 5 slow, deep breaths.
4. Begin the process of tensing then releasing muscle groups, one after another. Tense each muscle group for 10 seconds, and then relax for 15 seconds before moving on to the next group. Try this progression:
 - Scrunch your face. Let go.
 - Clench your teeth and jaw. Let go.
 - Shrug both shoulders to your ears. Let go.
 - Raise both arms from the shoulder. Let go.
 - Squeeze hands into fists. Let go.
 - Press your knees together. Let go.
 - Point toes toward the ceiling. Let go.



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