



How to get a better night's sleep

Sleep - are you getting enough? For some people, enough is six hours. Other people just don't feel right with less than eight hours. People need more or less sleep at different phases in their life. Women may need more or less sleep at different phases of the month.

The simplest way to tell if you're getting enough is by noticing every morning - do you feel rested? Do you wake up without an alarm clock and feel ready to get right out of bed and start your day?

Here are some sleep tips:

1. **Keep a regular sleep routine.** Don't vary the times you go to bed and wake up – even on the weekends. Then your body will be in a rhythm and it will be easier to wake up in the morning.
2. **Be in bed and asleep by 10.30pm.**
3. **Keep the bedroom for sleep and sex only.** Don't watch TV, work, call friends or do anything else. Your body will then associate the bedroom with sleep.
4. **Wind down towards bedtime.** Stop working an hour or more before bedtime, and avoid excessive stimulation in the form of TV, phone calls, or anything exciting. Relaxing activities could include a warm bath and relaxing music – these stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system which relaxes the body.
5. **Pre bedtime snacks.** Eat a high protein snack several hours before bed. This can provide Tryptophan, a precursor to serotonin and Melatonin which help sleep. Avoid sugary snacks or grains which will raise the blood sugar and inhibit sleep. Later, when blood sugar drops, the hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) may wake you up.
6. **Go to the toilet just before bed.**
7. **Keep the temperature constant and a little cool.** If your bedroom is too warm, you will not be able to sleep well. Try 22-23 degrees Celsius.
8. **Keep the bedroom dark +/- wear an eye mask.** Shutting out the light causes the brain to make Melatonin which helps sleep, and enhances sleep quality.
9. **Keep the bedroom quiet +/- wear ear plugs.** Excessive noise from the environment or other people in the house can be disruptive.
10. **Wear socks to bed.** Due to the fact that feet have the poorest circulation, they often feel cold before the rest of the body. This reduces night waking.
11. **Journaling.** If you are lying in bed with your mind racing, write all your thoughts and ideas down, and get them out of your head.
12. **Read or listen to something completely unrelated.** Avoid reading work or study related material in bed. Read or listen to something completely unrelated and preferably light. This will help your mind switch away from work.
13. **Use a relaxation CD.** Many people find these helpful. It can be just relaxing music, or perhaps a gentle stretching routine you can do under the blanket.

14. **Meditate twice a day.** But not just before bed, because this can be stimulating for some.
15. **Avoid alcohol.** Although alcohol will make people drowsy, the effect is short lived and people will often wake up several hours later, unable to fall back asleep. Alcohol will also keep you from falling into the deeper stages of sleep, where the body does most of its healing.
16. **Exercise regularly.** Exercising for at least 30 minutes every day can help you fall asleep. However, don't exercise too close to bedtime or it may keep you awake. Studies show exercising in the morning is the best if you can do it.
17. **Get bright sunlight in the morning.** Bright sunlight exposure, with your sunglasses off, before 11am helps your brain to suppress melatonin production. This also enables you to sleep better when you go to bed in the dark, when melatonin is released.

Things you can take:

- Camomile tea or a relaxing herbal tea
 - Valerium
 - Calcium and Magnesium
 - Melatonin.
18. **Take a Power Nap.** If you haven't slept the night before, have a nap when you can. Thirty minutes will restore your performance. One hour will enhance your performance.