

Tips for Improving Sleep Habits

1. Avoid caffeine, alcohol and nicotine prior to bedtime

Having these stimulants too close to bedtime may keep you awake at night. Avoid them within three hours of turning in.

2. Keep a regular sleep schedule

Go to bed at the same time and wake up at the same time every day. Try to stick to this routine even on the weekends. Eventually, your body will get into a rhythm and expect to awake and sleep at certain times.

3. Exercise early

Exercising regularly has a variety of health benefits, including promoting better quality sleep. Avoid vigorous exercise three hours before bed.

4. Follow a relaxing bedtime routine

Do you have a bedtime ritual? You may find it easier to fall asleep if you make an effort to relax and unwind before bed. For example, take a warm bath or shower, practice relaxation exercises like meditation or yoga, listen to calming music or do some light reading.

5. Go to bed only when you're sleepy

You don't want to stay in bed for long periods of time while awake. If you don't fall asleep within 20-30 minutes, get out of bed, go to another room and do something relaxing until you feel tired enough to sleep.

6. Use the bed to sleep, not work

Your bed may be a comfortable place to eat, watch TV and work, but try to find other areas outside your bedroom for these activities. By using your bed only for sleep, you're strengthening the connection between your bed and sleeping.

7. Make your bedroom a comfortable place to rest

Turn your bedroom into a sleep-inducing environment. Remove distractions, loud noise and bright lighting. Keep your room cool, and play soft music if that helps you to sleep. Also, if your mattress and pillows aren't comfortable, it may be time to purchase new bedding.

8. Avoid naps

While napping is often a great way to recharge, afternoon napping may make it harder to fall asleep at night. If you're tired during the day, go for a walk or do some gentle exercise. If you can't help it, take a nap but keep it short.

9. Follow doctor's guidance on sleep medication

Take prescribed sleep medications as instructed and at the same time every night. Don't take over-the-counter medications or supplements without first talking to your doctor.

10. Change your electronic habits

Researchers found that levels of melatonin, the hormone that regulates sleep-wake cycles, is affected by blue light. Turn off electronic devices at least two hours prior to bedtime. When using computer screens during the day reduce screen brightness and use white fonts with black backgrounds.

