

Healthy Sleep Habits

1. **Get up and go to bed at the same time every day, even on weekends.** If you have a regular sleep cycle and get up at the same time every day, you are likely to feel sleepy by bedtime.
2. **If you can't fall asleep within about 20 minutes,** or if you wake during the night and cannot get back to sleep within about 20 minutes, get up and leave the bedroom and do a calm activity until you feel sleepy (keep the lights dim, eat a light snack, read something boring).
3. **Don't check the clock** when you wake at night, as checking the time reinforces the habit of waking. If your alarm hasn't gone off, it doesn't matter what time it is – it's just time to sleep.
4. **Learn to roll over and go back to sleep.** It is normal for people to wake enough to shift position in bed several times during the night, but they may not even remember waking because it was so brief and they didn't fully awaken. If you are having insomnia in the middle of the night, it is important to learn to avoid turning your mind on when you wake during the night, and instead to simply roll over and go back to sleep.
5. **Exercise regularly, but not right before bed.** When people increase their level of physical activity, it almost always improves their sleep. However, vigorous exercise right before bed can interfere with falling asleep.
6. **Use your bed only for sleeping,** so when you go to bed, you know it is time to sleep. Do not watch television, surf the Internet, do homework, pay your bills, or have emotional conversations in bed. Sex should be the only activity in bed other than sleep.
7. **Make sure your bed and bedroom are quiet, dark and comfortable.** A cool room temperature can help you sleep, and if ambient noise is a problem, try using a fan or other source of white noise or listening to calm, quiet music.
8. **Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol for at least 4 to 6 hours before bed.** Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants. While alcohol may initially make you feel sleepy, when it starts leaving your system you are likely to have fragmented sleep.
9. **Avoid napping during the day,** so that you are sleepy at bedtime. If you must nap, keep it short.
10. **Practice relaxation techniques** before bed, or after you get in a comfortable position in bed. This can relax your body and slow your mind and allow you to fall asleep.
11. **Try listening to sleep stories.** Through a podcast or app, you can listen to a person telling a story with a non-engaging plot or no plot at all. These stories can help people to distract themselves from their own thoughts and worries and drift off to sleep.
12. **Avoid watching television, playing video games, or using a computer or smartphone just before bed or when you wake at night,** as these are all engaging activities and the light from the screen tells your brain it is time to be awake.
13. **Don't take your worries to bed.** It is sometimes helpful to designate a “worry period” earlier in the day or to write down your concerns so you can stop focusing on them. Try using relaxation techniques in bed; then you can focus on relaxing instead of focusing on worries.
14. **If you are spending a lot more time in bed than you are spending asleep,** reduce the amount of time you are in bed to the amount of time you have actually been sleeping, then gradually increase the time so that you continue to sleep most of the time you are in bed.
15. **Try a weighted blanket.** People often find that the weight helps them to feel safe and secure and helps their body to feel heavy and relaxed, which helps them fall – and stay – asleep.
16. **Practice accepting how you sleep.** Implement the above habits that can help you sleep well, but let go of the need to control your sleep. Tell yourself that you can cope if you don't sleep well.