



## Tips for Better Sleep

Good sleep is important to physical and mental health. If you are experiencing trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep, be sure to talk with your doctor or nurse. In addition, these common-sense tips may help you sleep better:

1. **Caffeine** - Reduce your use of caffeine. Caffeine is a stimulant that can make it hard to go to sleep. Caffeine can be found in coffee, tea, soda, chocolate, certain types of gum, and energy booster pills and drinks. Avoid caffeine at least 8-hours before going to bed.
2. **Alcohol** - Don't use alcohol before bed. Alcohol can make you feel sleepy but it can also interfere with staying asleep.
3. **Cigarettes** - Don't smoke before bed. Nicotine is a stimulant. It can make it hard to get to sleep.
4. **Naps** - Daytime naps can interfere with falling asleep at night. If you must take a nap, don't sleep longer than a half-hour and be sure to nap only once, in the mid-afternoon.
5. **Get sun** - Sunlight can adjust the body's internal clock. Try to get out in the sun during the day.
6. **Exercise** - Regular exercise, like taking a walk each day, can help you get to sleep and stay asleep.
7. **Food** - Eating a large meal before bed can interfere with sleep. After eating dinner, wait at least 2 hours before trying to sleep.
8. **Spicy food** - If you get heartburn, avoid spicy or fatty food before bed. Stomach upset can cause you to have trouble sleeping.
9. **Liquids** - If you drink a lot of fluids before bed, your sleep will be interrupted during the night for trips to the toilet. Take care to limit how much you drink before bed.
10. **Disruptions** - Do you sleep with a pet? Does your partner snore too loud? Are street sounds and sirens keeping you up? Simple problem solving can help to eliminate disruptions such as these. Have your pet sleep in another room so you can sleep undisturbed. Suggest your partner roll-over onto his/her side in order to stop snoring. Use inexpensive noise reduction earplugs to block out street noise and sirens.
11. **Regular sleep** - You can reinforce your body's sleeping and waking cycle, by sticking to a regular sleep schedule. Try to go to bed and wake up at nearly the same time every day, even on the weekends.
12. **Stress** - If you can't fall asleep after 15 - 20 minutes, don't stress yourself out by looking at the clock and worrying. Stress will only make it harder to sleep. Instead, get up and do something relaxing.
13. **Avoid stimulating activity before bed** - Watching TV, playing video games or using the computer before bed can make it harder to sleep. Try to avoid these activities. Instead, read, knit or listen to quiet music before bed.
14. **Bedtime routine** - A bedtime routine that is calming and soothing can help you get to sleep and stay asleep. Take a warm bath or shower. Read. Listen to calming music. Lower the lights. Tell your body that it's time to start unwinding from a long day.
15. **Park your worries** - If your worries are keeping you awake, get up and write them down on a piece of paper. Tell yourself they will be there for you to attend to in the morning.
16. **Relax** - Relaxation techniques can help you calm down and prepare for sleep. Think of a calming phrase, word, memory or prayer. Examples might be "still pond", "I am safe", "rest" or "deep sleep". Repeat the phrase to yourself as you focus on your breathing. Slow your breathing down. Inhale to the count of 4 and then gently exhale to the count of 4.