

Better Sleep Guidebook



SLEEP FOUNDATION

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Sleep Routine

Going to sleep at a consistent time every night can make it easier to fall asleep. Building a bedtime routine is an easy way to help yourself stick with a consistent bedtime. Although bedtime routines themselves have not been widely studied, initial research suggests they may help improve sleep.

We'll walk you through everything you need to know when it comes to figuring out how much sleep you need and setting a bedtime for yourself. Then, we'll share a number of ideas and quick tips for some relaxing activities that you can build into a bedtime routine.

The more you stick to a sleep routine, the easier it will be to do your sleep routine in the future. Habits don't build in a day, so don't be discouraged if you fall off track or it takes a while to do your routine consistently.

Keep trying and do the steps of your routine when you can and keep going until it sinks in.

Don't feel like you have to do everything at once. Try to start small with three steps in your routine first, then add more over time as you get used to them.





Bedtime and Wakeup Time

Setting a consistent bedtime and wake time – even on the weekends – can help you make sure you get the amount of sleep you need.

How Much Sleep Do I Need?

Adults typically need at least seven hours of sleep a night, but everyone's sleep needs are different so it's possible for someone to need eight or nine hours of sleep instead. If you're not sure how much sleep you need, try tracking how many hours you sleep and note how much sleep it takes for you to consistently wake up feeling rested.

You can calculate your ideal bedtime by taking the amount of sleep you want to get and working backwards from the time you need to wake up.

Be sure to add in extra time to account for the time it takes you to fall asleep and nighttime awakenings. People often sleep for slightly less than they think they do, because of nighttime awakenings they don't remember, or because they're using sleep trackers that overestimate their sleep time.



How Do I Set My Bedtime?

It's best to set sleep and wake times that you can stick to every day, even on days off, weekends, and vacation. If you can't stick to the same times every day, try to keep your bedtime and wake times as consistent as you can for as many days of the week as you can. Giving your body a rough pattern of when it can expect to sleep is a step in the right direction. Try setting a reminder for when you need to start winding down for the night to get you in the right mindset for sleep.

Putting It All Together

Let's say you regularly need to wake up by 7 a.m. on weekdays, and you need eight hours of sleep to feel refreshed, then you should fall asleep by 11 p.m. at the latest. With that in mind, you might want to make your "lights out" time 10 or 10:30 p.m., to give you plenty of time to fall asleep, and to provide some extra time in case you wake up in the middle of the night.





Avoid Electronics Before Bed

Smartphones, computers, and other digital devices emit blue light that can interfere with your sleep. Blue light exposure suppresses the production of melatonin, a sleep-promoting hormone, in the brain. Avoid using digital devices as much as you can when you're trying to wind down for bed.

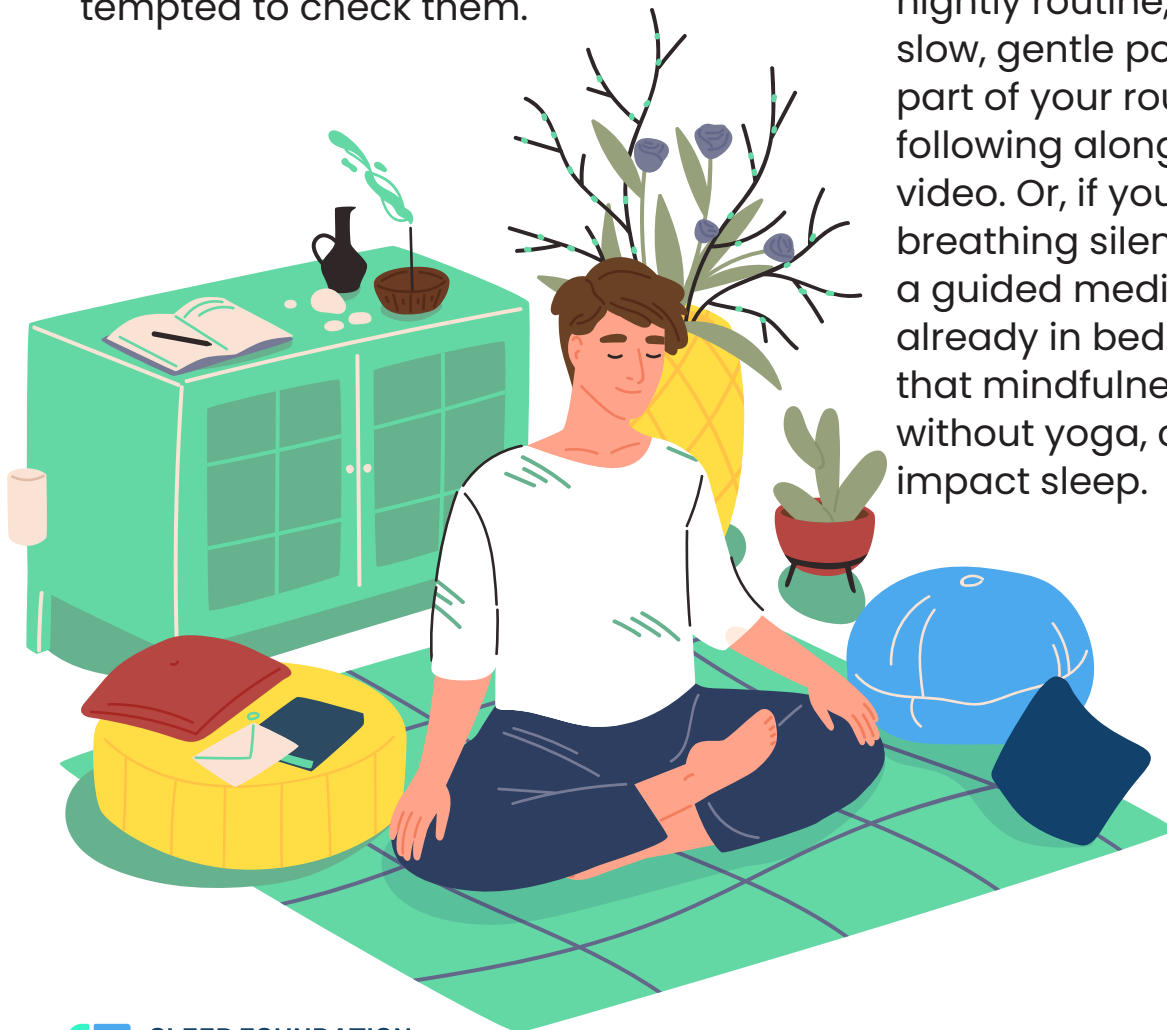
Try putting your devices in another room or a less visible space before you start your bedtime routine every night. Keeping your devices out of sight will help you be less tempted to check them.



Try Light Stretches, Yoga, or Meditation

Sleep-promoting yoga is not strenuous exercise, but instead, a gentle practice similar to meditation through movement. One study found that nearly 60% of people who practice yoga say it improves their sleep. The type of yoga studied involved focused breathing or mindfulness meditation, which can promote relaxation and prepare a person for sleep.

If you're practicing yoga as part of a nightly routine, consider doing a few slow, gentle poses or stretches as a part of your routine rather than following along with an hour-long video. Or, if you prefer, practice deep breathing silently or while listening to a guided meditation after you're already in bed. Studies also show that mindfulness meditation alone, without yoga, can also positively impact sleep.





Write a To-Do List or Start Journaling

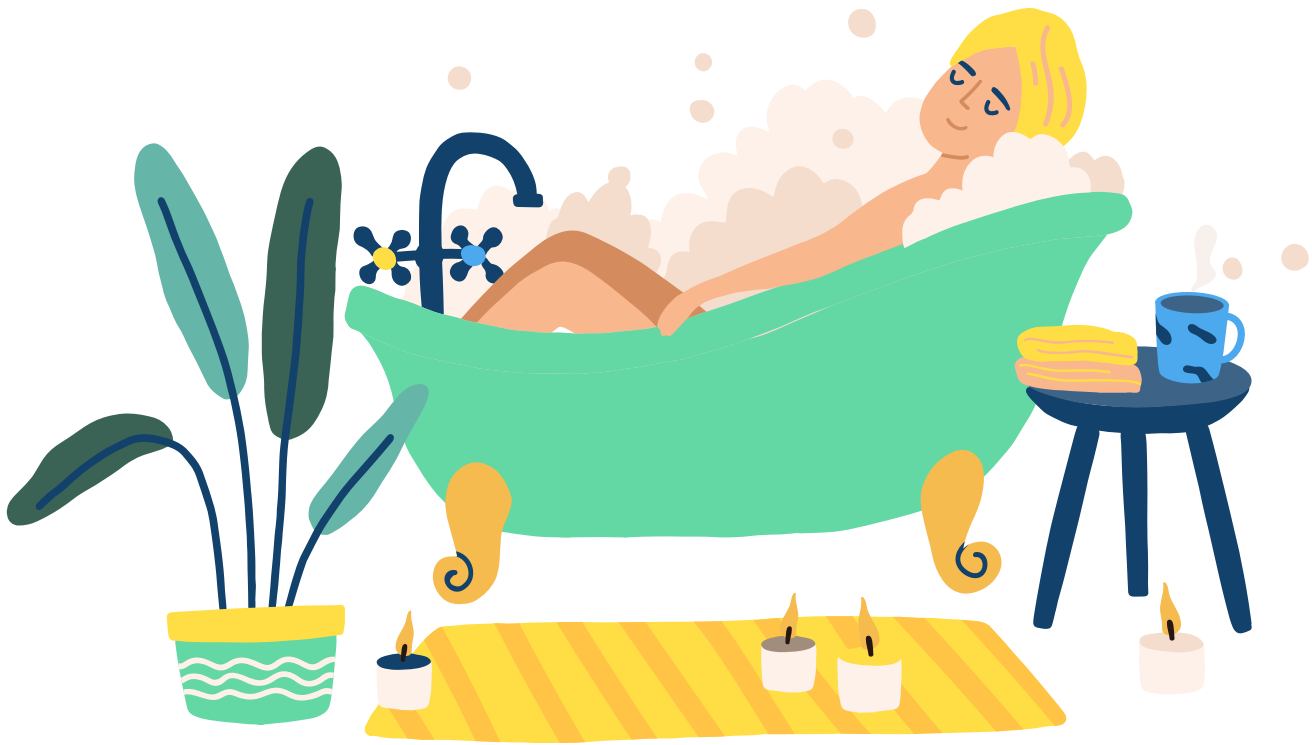
Worrying can keep you up at night, so try doing some writing before bedtime that helps ease your worries. Journaling and making to-do lists for the next day are both great ways to tackle your worries. Research suggests that journaling about worries relaxes some people, helping them fall asleep faster. Writing a very specific to-do list planning out how you will approach the next day has also been shown to help people fall asleep. The more detailed your to-do list, the faster you might fall asleep.



Read a Book

Reading before bed is a relaxing activity that has been connected to better sleep quality. Make sure you read something that feels pleasant or even boring — getting wrapped up in a page-turning story can end up keeping you awake and reading for too long. The big thing here is to make sure you're only reading actual printed books before bed. Phones, laptops, e-readers, and other digital devices emit light that suppresses melatonin, the sleep hormone.





Take a Warm Bath (or Shower) Before Bed

Taking a warm (or hot) bath or shower before bed can help you fall asleep faster. If you already shower at night, consider working it into your bedtime routine. Showers lead well into calming pre-bed activities like brushing your teeth or practicing your skincare routine. One thought as to why warm showers help you sleep is that warm water warms the skin, drawing blood flow to your hands and feet and lowering your core body temperature. Your core body temperature naturally drops as your body winds down for sleep, so taking a warm shower might help kick start that process.



Drink Herbal Tea

Try sipping a mug of hot, herbal tea in the evening as you wind down with a soothing pre-bed activity, like reading a book. Herbal teas are made from dried herbs rather than tea leaves, so they don't usually contain caffeine and won't keep you up.

Certain types of herbal tea, like **chamomile tea** and **passionflower tea**, have been found to improve sleep quality, reduce stress, and reduce mood issues.

Sleep Environment

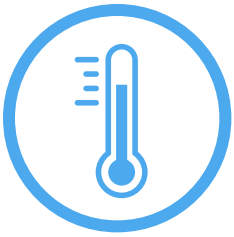
Having a calm, relaxing, dark environment to sleep in goes a long way to getting good sleep.

When we talk about your sleep environment we mean the obvious points like temperature, noise, and light, as well as things like humidity, bedding, and the layout of your room.

These tips for creating a sleep-friendly environment might seem like a lot at first, but like any new health habit, they are doable.

We recommend identifying which tips will be easiest for you to follow and which ones will have the biggest impact on your sleep personally.

Work these tips into your life in chunks so you don't get overwhelmed trying to do too many at once. Once a tip has become a regular part of your life or routine, move on to another tip.



Temperature

Sleeping in a cool bedroom may help you fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer.

Keep Your Bedroom Between 60° and 67° F (15.6 to 19.4° C)

Your core body temperature naturally lowers as it winds down for sleep, so it's best to make sure your sleeping environment matches that. Some people prefer to sleep hotter or colder than this range, so it's best to track your bedroom's temperature and whether it feels like the room's temperature is making it hard to fall or stay asleep.

Babies Sleep Best Around 69° F (20.5° C)

If you share a room with a baby, you may need to adjust to a warmer bedroom until they grow older. Sleeping in a warmer environment may not work for everyone, but the trade-off is worth it. An infant with disrupted sleep is more likely to interrupt your sleep than a higher bedroom temperature.

Ways to Keep Your Bedroom Cool

- Use air conditioning, if possible
- Turn on a ceiling fan, window box fan, or small table-top fan
- After the sun has set and it has cooled off a little outside, open the windows for ventilation
- Keep curtains and blinds closed during the day to block the sun's heat
- Swap heavy bedding with lightweight sheets, blankets, and comforters
- Switch to lightweight, breathable pajamas
- Since heat rises, sleep on a lower level of the home, if possible
- Take a warm bath before bedtime to start your body's bedtime cooldown



Light Exposure

Light exposure is the most important external factor impacting when you feel tired and awake.

Exposure to light signals to your circadian rhythm, or internal body clock, that it is time to feel alert. Exposure to darkness triggers the release of melatonin, the sleep hormone, signaling that it is time to fall asleep. For this reason, it is important to keep your bedroom dark. Even exposure to something as dim as a nightlight might disrupt your sleep.

Welcome Light When It's Time to Wake Up

Exposure to light can help tell your body that it's time to wake up. Sunlight streaming in on your eyes is a great way to help you wake up naturally, though indoor lighting is much easier to work with. Some lights and lamps can be set to turn on at preset times to help you get up, but you can always try turning a bedside light on when you wake up to keep you from falling back asleep.

Ways to Avoid Evening and Nighttime Light Exposure

Try these tips to avoid sleep-disrupting light:

- Use a dim table lamp rather than bright overhead lights in the hours before bed
- Avoid looking at electronic screens, like a smartphone or television, before sleep
- Buy blackout curtains and close them, so early morning sunlight doesn't shine in through the window
- Turn off hallway lights, or any light that could shine in from under the door
- Use motion-sensitive night lights in your hallways and bathroom to illuminate nighttime bathroom visits, so you don't have to turn on bright overhead lights
- Use a sleep mask or piece of fabric to cover your eyes during sleep, if you cannot eliminate all external light sources



Noise

Exposure to nighttime noise can disrupt sleep and put you at increased risk for certain health problems, like depression and cardiovascular disease.

Nighttime noise might come from people you share a living space with or from outside of your home. For example, nearby vehicles, trains, and airplanes are common sources of sound during the night. In urban areas, neighbors and pedestrians can contribute to disruptive noise. Even if you don't remember waking up, hearing noise as you sleep can still cause negative effects.

Set Up Quiet Hours

If you live with others and have different schedules, it may help to set up some times of day where you all agree to be mindful of how much noise you make. Setting up quiet times when people are typically asleep can go a long way to cutting out accidental noise keeping you up at night.

Talk With Your Bed Partner

If your bed partner creates noise that wakes you at night, have a conversation with them to problem-solve the issue. Sometimes, people choose to sleep separately to avoid sleep disruption. If the person you share a bed with snores or gasps for breath while asleep, it might help to see a doctor.

Ways to Block Out Nighttime Noise

- Use a soothing background sound to drown out other noises, like a fan, sleep app, or white noise machine
- Wear earplugs to reduce your exposure to noise in a loud environment
- Look into sound-reducing windows and doors - some local programs may provide assistance for people who live by airports or other loud areas
- Try to seal gaps or cracks in doors and windows where noise sneaks in using towels or old T-shirts
- If you've recently moved in somewhere, you may adjust to some new noises over time



Technology

A wide variety of research shows that bringing technology into the bedroom is a bad idea. Using screens before bed can affect our natural production of melatonin and the presence of screens can be distracting if you're trying to sleep.



Avoid Technology for an Hour Before Sleep

Exposure to artificial light in the evening can make sleeping more difficult, and the blue light emitted from your television, smart phone, tablet, or laptop has a more intense effect than indoor lighting. Blue light exposure keeps your brain from releasing melatonin, a hormone that promotes sleep.

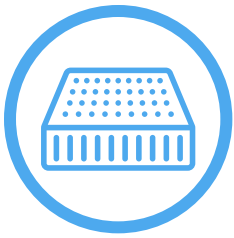
Try to avoid technology before sleep by taking care of any emails or text messages you need to send earlier in the evening. Also, try not to fall asleep watching television.

Keep Your Phone out of Bed

Even using your phone for a relaxing activity like reading can keep you from falling asleep. If, like many people, you feel a strong urge to regularly check your phone, keeping it in another room altogether might help. If you share your bedroom with others, try to get them on board, too. It turns out phone checking is contagious, with many people checking their phones within 30 seconds after seeing someone else check theirs.

Keep Other Screens Out of the Bedroom Too

Try to keep larger screens like televisions, laptops, and computer monitors out of view when you're in bed. Looking around and seeing these screens can distract you or remind you of work or other things you have to do when you're trying to wind down. Avoid using any of these technologies while you're in bed too — try to keep bed as a place for sleeping only in your mind.



Mattress

Anyone who has woken up with back or neck pain after sleeping on the wrong bed knows how important it can be for your bed to work well for your body.

Find the Right Mattress Firmness for Your Body

Beds that are too firm or too soft for your body weight can both result in pressure points, discomfort, and pain, making firmness a very important factor in your decision-making.

Experiencing pain at night can disturb sleep, and disrupted sleep can increase pain, creating a difficult-to-break cycle.

Research suggests that medium firm mattresses tend to be best for back pain. That said, no single mattress works perfectly for all people, because we all have different body types and sleeping patterns. To find your ideal mattress, research mattresses that are rated highly for those who share a similar body weight and sleep position preference with you.

Use Risk-Free Sleep Trials

Look into brands that provide a risk-free sleep trial, allowing you to try their mattress in your home for multiple nights before deciding if you want to keep it. It often takes a few nights of sleep for a person to adjust to a mattress and decide if it fits their needs. Sleep trials make that possible and allow for free returns when a mattress causes discomfort.

Save Money With a Mattress Topper

If your mattress is not a good match for your body, a mattress topper can make your existing mattress feel softer or firmer, depending on the topper's material, thickness, and performance. Mattress toppers cost much less than mattresses and have the ability to change the feel of a mattress temporarily, until you are able to get a new bed.



Bedding

The bedding you sleep in and the clothing you wear to bed can affect how well you sleep. You'll want everything you sleep in to **feel right on your skin** and keep you at a **comfortable temperature through the night**.



Choose Fabrics for Your Climate

Bedding made from breathable, natural materials like cotton and linen and lighter blankets will help regulate body heat when it's hot out, while flannel sheets, polyester bedding, and heavier blankets will lock body heat in when it's cold. If you live somewhere with major temperature changes across seasons, it might make sense for you to have at least two sets of bedding and sleepwear — for warmer and cooler months.

Sleep in Comfortable Materials

Choose pajamas that feel soft and comfortable on your skin and are not too tight or too loose. For bedding, use sheets, blankets, and a comforter or quilt that you enjoy touching and that keeps you warm enough through the night. There's some research to suggest that wool sleepwear promotes better sleep, but wearing what feels comfortable to you is most important.



Humidity

Although humidity might not be the first element of your home that springs to mind when you think of sleep, it does have an impact. **Tracking your home's humidity** and **keeping it in the right range** will help prevent the presence of mold and creepy crawlies that can disturb your sleep.

Keep Indoor Relative Humidity Between 30% and 50%

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the ideal indoor relative humidity level falls between 30% and 50%. No home should have a humidity level of over 60%, at the very highest. When your home's indoor humidity is too high, there's a risk of mold growing.

The presence of mold can increase the severity of a person's allergies or even prompt an allergic-like response in those who don't have allergies. These symptoms might interfere with sleep. Indoor mold is correlated with an increased number of sleep disturbances, as well as with daytime sleepiness, snoring, and insomnia.

In addition to helping prevent mold, low humidity levels may also discourage infestations of pests, like cockroaches, and reduce the presence of dust mites, both of which can also cause allergic-like reactions that may disrupt sleep.

Track and Adjust Your Home's Humidity

Many homes have humidity monitors built into their furnaces. Some monitors even allow a person to adjust the humidity of their home to the percentage they desire. People who live in spaces without a built-in humidity monitor may buy a low-cost humidity sensor online for around \$10 to \$20. If you find your bedroom humidity level falls outside of the recommended range, you can adjust it by using a portable humidifier or dehumidifier.



Allergens

People who experience allergies tend to take longer to fall asleep and are more likely to wake up at night. As a result, people with allergies are also more likely to experience morning headaches and daytime fatigue.

Buildup of allergens – particles like pollen, pet dander, and dust – can trigger your allergy symptoms. Reducing allergens in the bedroom can help you get the sleep you need.

Avoid Bringing in Outdoor Allergens

If seasonal allergies are the problem, keep your home's doors and windows closed as much as possible, so grass and tree pollen cannot waft in. If allergy symptoms continue to keep you up at night, there are a few more things you can do to keep allergens out.

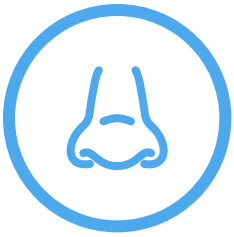
Change into fresh clothes right when you get home after going outside, and shower before bed to wash allergens away.

Take your allergy medication before sleep if all else fails, but be sure to discuss any medication changes with your doctor first.

Cleanse Your Bedroom of Allergens

Do not allow your pets into your bedroom during the day, and have them sleep in a different space at night. This way, you will not be exposed to their hair and dander as you sleep. Regularly dust and vacuum your bedroom to avoid dust mite exposure. Investing in an air purifier can help remove a variety of allergens from the air in your sleeping environment.

Cleaning your bedding regularly, about every two weeks or so, can keep your sheets from holding on to allergens. Consider deep cleaning or removing any wall-to-wall carpeting or thick rugs as well, since both can hold on to allergens.



Smell

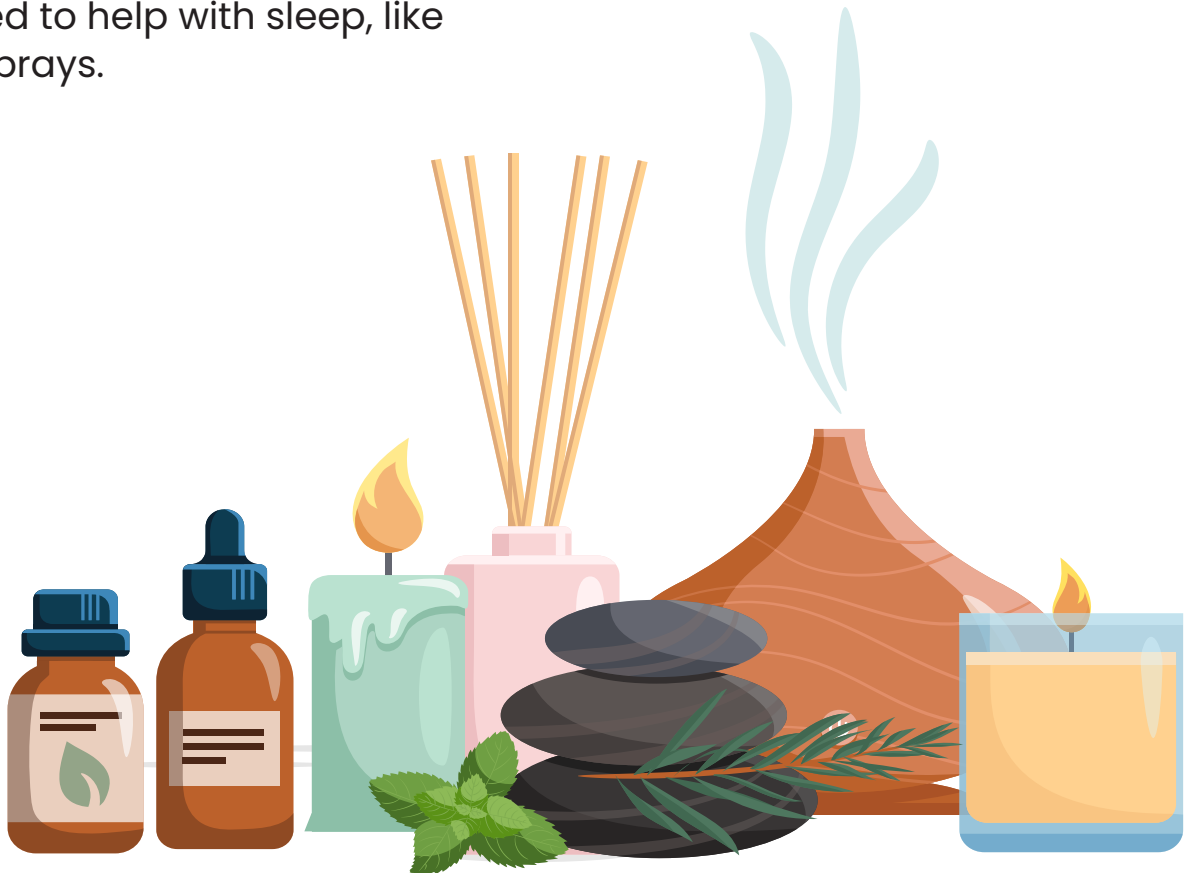
Aromatherapy allows many people to improve sleep using scents. You can use a variety of pleasant smells to make falling asleep and waking up easier.

Use Scents to Fall Asleep

The fragrance of certain essential oils, such as **lavender, rose, and chamomile**, have been found to help with sleep. You may use essential oils by sniffing them directly, dispersing them throughout the air in your bedroom, or diluting them with a carrier oil and applying them to your skin. Some companies manufacture essential oil products specifically designed to help with sleep, like pillow sprays.

Use Scents to Wake Up

Certain scents can help you feel more awake in the morning. Simply breathing in the smell of coffee can increase alertness. Consider using a coffee maker with a programmable timer, so you get a boost of energy upon waking up, before drinking your first cup of the day. Certain essential oils, like **peppermint and rosemary**, can also help increase alertness.





Room Layout

Your interior decorating choices can impact how well you sleep at night. **Exciting colors** and **clutter** can act as **barriers to your sleep**.

Stick With Cool Wall Colors

When painting your bedroom walls or selecting a comforter, try to choose cool colors, like gray or blue. Cool colors tend to be calming, while bright colors, like red, excite the brain and body. Being surrounded by a color like red can even affect your mood and heart rate. Stick-on wallpapers are a quicker way to change your walls than repainting. If you can't change the color of your sleeping space, try to only spend time there when it's dark.



Keep Your Room Clutter-Free

Visual clutter can generate stress, which is a known barrier to quality sleep. Disorganized items in your bedroom may reinforce the sensation of having too many “loose ends,” generating anxious feelings that may make it harder to relax your mind when you want to fall asleep.

While you don't need to go full-on Marie Kondo to get your bedroom organized, you should review what items you don't really need and to spend just a few minutes each day picking up clutter so that it doesn't build up and feel overwhelming to deal with. If you find you need a certain amount of clutter to feel cozy, you can try seeing what feels essential or comforting to have out and put away the rest.

Daily Wellness

Your sleep greatly impacts nearly all aspects of your health, and engaging in healthy practices during the day can have positive effects on your ability to sleep well at night.

Many researchers and medical professionals consider exercise, diet, and sleep to be the three pillars of good health. We've gathered important information and hot tips to help you find ways to improve how you exercise and what you eat for better sleep.

We know making major changes to your diet and exercise can be hard, both in terms of knowing where to start and in making changes that will last. Use our tips to help you look into the ways that your exercise and diet currently play into your life, and the ways they currently affect your sleep.

We recommend coming up with larger goals and making small, consistent changes over time to get there. Use our tips to make small steps toward those larger goals until each small step is a part of your everyday life. Start by making changes where you can, when you can. Any progress is a step in the right direction.





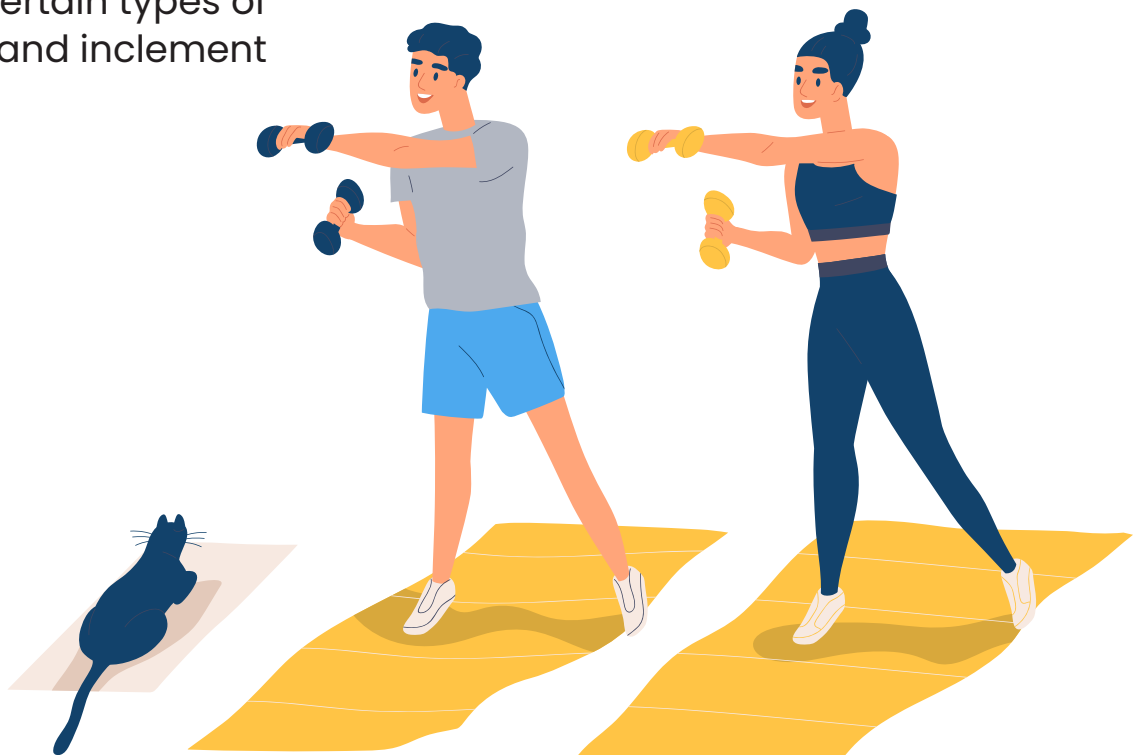
Exercise

Research suggests that not only is exercise beneficial, but also a lack of exercise can be harmful.

Engaging in regular exercise appears to help people live longer and experience fewer chronic illnesses. Regular aerobic exercise may also help people quit smoking, improve sleep, decrease stress levels, and increase quality of life.

Unfortunately, about 25% of adults in the U.S. are physically inactive, and 45% do not meet expert guidelines for aerobic exercise. Common barriers to exercise include feeling like there isn't enough time, lacking friends and family who exercise, feeling like you do not have enough energy to exercise, fear of injury, costs related to certain types of physical activity, and inclement weather.

We'll provide some information about different types of exercise and some best practices to help you approach exercising at your own pace. Creating and sticking with an exercise routine can be difficult, so it's ok to start with what you can do for now and regularly increase your activity level to a point that's beneficial for you and your sleep.



Types of Exercise

Exercise is often categorized by types, such as aerobic, strength, and mobility exercises. Some exercises only fit the criteria of one of these categories, while other exercises can help a person develop in more than one area at once.

Aerobic Exercise

Aerobic activity, also called cardio, increases your heart rate and breathing, providing benefits to your heart and lungs. Aerobic exercise can be described as moderate or vigorous-intensity depending on how much it increases your heart rate. Examples include running, swimming, and tennis.



Strength Exercise

Strength training, also called resistance training, aims to increase muscle strength. Examples include weight lifting, resistance band exercises, and bodyweight exercises, like push-ups.

Mobility Exercise

Mobility exercises help people maintain a full range of motion, so they can easily perform daily activities. These exercises typically involve stretching and increasing flexibility and do not count as aerobic or strength exercise time. Stretches are often best done after other types of exercise, when muscles are warm.



How Much Should I Exercise?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), adults should engage in **moderate-intensity exercise for a total of at least 150 minutes per week**. This activity can be broken up into smaller chunks of time. For example, you might exercise for **half an hour, five days per week**. Additionally, the CDC recommends also engaging in some type of **full-body strength training at least twice a week**.

Meeting the recommended amount of exercise per week can seem overwhelming if you don't have an exercise routine. Try focusing on the 150 minutes per week as a long-term goal to start, something you'll work your way up to with time. Staying active to the degree that you can is worth your time, and will help you get in the habit. **Walking regularly is a good place to start, even if it's as short as 15 minutes a day.**

Lastly, adults who spend less time sitting experience health benefits, so if your job or leisure activities involve sitting for long periods, try to break that up.

Stand up, walk around, and look for ways to naturally incorporate more movement into your day.

What Time Should I Exercise?

Afternoon exercise may impact your sleep by impairing production of the sleep hormone, melatonin. An analysis of multiple research studies found that vigorously exercising in the hour before sleep in particular can impair sleep. That being said, in this review, exercise done later in the day, but not in the hour before bedtime, did not seem to negatively impact sleep.

A good rule of thumb may be to **avoid exercising too close to bed if you can help it**, but everyone is different. Pay attention to **how the time you exercise affects your sleep**, and **adjust your exercise schedule as much as you can**.

If you exercise outdoors, the time of day you are exposed to sunlight may impact your sleep. Bright light exposure in the morning helps you fall asleep earlier at night and wake up earlier in the morning. Bright light exposure in the two hours before you sleep might prompt you to stay up later at night and wake up later in the morning.



Diet

Making healthy food choices can reduce your risk of heart disease, cancer, stroke, and other health problems in addition to helping with your sleep.

Although diet is shaped by a person's culture, personal preferences, and budget, research findings provide guidance in terms of how to eat a healthier diet that suits your unique situation. Making healthy food choices can reduce your risk of heart disease, cancer, stroke, and other health problems in addition to helping with your sleep.

Changing your diet isn't always easy, and some foods are more expensive or hard to find depending on where you live. Try to focus on what you can change, what in your diet is affecting your sleep, and where you can spend time and energy to make changes. Make healthy substitutions and changes where you can over time. Keep track of any changes to your sleep, and celebrate any progress that you make.

Timing Your Meals

Just as what you eat is important, so is when you eat. Meal timing has been found to impact your circadian rhythm, the internal body clock that controls daily physical changes, like your sleep-wake schedule.

Avoid eating in general during the three hours before you sleep, since doing so may reduce sleep quality. Also, try to drink fluids earlier in the day and avoid them near bedtime.



Drinking too much liquid at night can interfere with your sleep by causing you to wake up during the night to use the bathroom.

If you can't avoid eating close to your bedtime, try to stop eating as early as you can before bed and avoid eating heavy meals.

Foods to Avoid Before Sleep

Avoid consuming the following three hours before you go to bed:



Excessive Fluids



Spicy foods



Caffeine



Dense meals



Alcohol



Chocolate
(contains caffeine)

Foods that Promote Sleep

Studies suggest that a healthy diet is linked to better sleep. For example, the Mediterranean diet, which is high in fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, whole grains, and fish, is thought to contain many sleep-promoting nutrients. Try to incorporate foods associated with better sleep into your diet.

Food	Sleep-Promoting Ingredients	Serving Size
Cherries	Melatonin	200 g
Fatty fish	Vitamin D, omega-3 fatty acids	150 - 300 g
Kiwifruit	Antioxidants, serotonin, folate	2 fruits
Lettuce	N-butanol	1 ½ cups, shredded
Tart cherry juice	Melatonin, phytonutrients	8 fl oz, twice daily
Walnuts	Melatonin, serotonin, polyphenols	1 oz
Whole grains	GABA, calcium, potassium, and magnesium	½ cup cooked rice, pasta or other grains; 1 slice of bread; 1 cup cereal



Sleep

After improving your exercise routine and diet, your sleep might naturally improve on its own. There are a few extra healthy habits you can work on to improve your sleep.

Restrict Your Bed Use

Try only using your bed for two activities: sleep and sex. Using your bed solely for sleep helps your brain associate being in bed with falling asleep. When you check email, read news, watch television, or engage with social media from bed, you are no longer viewing your bed as a relaxing space intended for rest.

Additionally, devices with screens like smartphones, televisions, and eReaders expose you to sleep-disrupting blue light, so it's best to keep them out of the bedroom.



Optimize Your Naps

If you find that you're feeling tired or lacking energy during the day even though you're improving your nightly sleep, **consider napping if you can.** Studies show that napping can improve thinking, memory, attention, and management of emotions.

Timing Your Naps

The right amount of time for a nap varies from person to person, but many people feel refreshed after **resting anywhere from 5 to 25 minutes.** The **ideal cap in length for a nap is shorter than 30 minutes** — napping longer than 30 minutes can leave you feeling groggy instead of refreshed when you wake up.

Try timing your nap with your “post-lunch dip,” the period of time in the early afternoon where many people naturally feel tired. After lunch time, pay attention to and note what time you feel most sluggish.

Schedule some time moving forward to lie down for a short nap just before that wave of early afternoon sleepiness hits. **Try to avoid napping right after a meal or too close to your usual bedtime.**

Try a Caffeine Nap

For an additional boost of energy, try a caffeine nap. A caffeine nap involves consuming coffee or another caffeinated drink just before taking a short nap. Research has shown that a caffeine nap can improve your attention and reduce tiredness more than a nap alone, minus the caffeine.



Alcohol and Caffeine

Both alcohol and caffeine affect your sleep in a variety of ways.

Drinking alcohol may help you fall asleep faster, but it's likely to disrupt your sleep and reduce your sleep quality later in the night. Drinking caffeine throughout the day can make falling asleep take longer and even cause insomnia symptoms.

Both alcohol and caffeine alter sleep architecture, or the amount of time a person spends in each stage of sleep.





Alcohol and Caffeine Use

Although alcohol and caffeine often negatively impact sleep, many people can still consume them in moderation and go on to get a good night's rest. The key is to use these substances mindfully, following research-backed recommendations for alcohol and caffeine consumption.

Cutting out alcohol and coffee completely may be the ideal move for better sleep, but we recognize that's not exactly a realistic goal for most people. We recommend starting by taking a clear look at your current alcohol and caffeine consumption habits, then work on building some achievable, meaningful reductions in your alcohol and caffeine intake where you can.

Set some long-term goals for changing the ways you consume alcohol and caffeine, whether that's lowering the amount you have per day or stopping your consumption earlier in the day. Give yourself looser goals to start — like only having four drinks maximum a day — then move the goalposts slowly over time as you consistently meet your targets.

Keep going and keep trying until you meet your long-term goals, even if you stumble along the way. Progress is not always a straight line from point A to point B, and any progress is a step in the right direction.

Quick Tips

- Try to stick to one alcoholic drink or less per day for women and two drinks or less per day for men
- Consider limiting your caffeine intake to 400 milligrams per day (about four 8oz cups of coffee a day)
- It's best to avoid caffeine in the six hours before you go to sleep
- Set your last call for alcohol consumption at least an hour before sleep
- Recognize that caffeine and alcohol sensitivity varies, so you may need to consume even less than guidelines suggest to achieve good quality sleep



Caffeine

Worldwide, caffeine is the most commonly used stimulant drug. Caffeine naturally occurs in drinks like coffee and tea and is added to energy drinks and certain sodas.

Although people often use caffeine to make themselves feel more awake, it has been shown to negatively affect sleep. People using caffeine may have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep. Caffeine also alters how a person sleeps, delaying when they enter rapid eye movement sleep and leading to increased tiredness upon waking.

Consuming caffeine even six hours before bedtime has been found to disrupt sleep.

Since caffeine increases alertness, caffeine use can mask a sleep disorder, like obstructive sleep apnea. Caffeine may also exacerbate other sleep-related issues, like restless legs syndrome.

Drinks That Contain Caffeine

A variety of drinks contain caffeine, though caffeine content varies from drink-to-drink.

Beverage	Serving Size	Caffeine per serving	Caffeine Level
Coffee	8 fl oz	75 – 300 mg	High Caffeine
Energy Drinks	8 fl oz	70 – 150 mg	Moderate to High Caffeine
Teas (Black and Green)	8 fl oz	20 – 100 mg	Low to Moderate Caffeine
Carbonated Soft Drinks	12 fl oz	20 – 70 mg	Low to Moderate Caffeine
Caffeinated Water	12 fl oz	30 – 100 mg	Low to Moderate Caffeine
Coffee Liqueur	1 fl oz	9 mg	Low Caffeine
Decaf Coffee	8 fl oz	2 – 15 mg	Low Caffeine



How to Prevent Caffeine from Affecting Your Sleep

For most, it is possible to safely consume caffeine without it hurting sleep:

- Limit caffeine consumption to the morning or early afternoon hours, since it can affect sleep even when ingested six hours before bed
- Do not consume more than 400 milligrams of caffeine in a day
- Cut back on caffeine if it interferes with your ability to obtain seven to nine hours of sleep per night
- Pay attention to your tiredness levels before ingesting caffeine, since caffeine can mask tiredness from sleep deprivation or sleep disorders

How to Consume Less Caffeine

Multiple strategies can help people consume less caffeine:

- Set a specific time of day where you stop consuming caffeine, and stick to it
- Opt for decaffeinated coffee or herbal teas, instead of regular coffee or black and green teas
- Use sunlight exposure or a blue-enriched light therapy lamp to increase morning energy
- Eat breakfast, which has been found to improve cognitive function in both adults and adolescents, for a morning energy boost



Alcohol

Alcohol is a fermented drink, usually consumed in the form of liquor, wine, or beer. Alcohol acts as a depressant, which means it decreases activity in the central nervous system. As with caffeine, alcohol use is very common, with nearly 86% of adult Americans having drunk alcohol in their lifetime and nearly 70% in the last year.

Popular wisdom claims alcohol aids sleep, but research shows that is only true when it comes to falling asleep. **Drinking can help a person fall asleep faster, but it harms sleep overall.** As the night wears on, a person who drank alcohol before bed may find themselves waking up more often or experiencing a lower quality of sleep.

Alcohol consumption may also exacerbate certain sleep disorders, like obstructive sleep apnea.

As with caffeine, alcohol use is very common, with nearly 86% of adult Americans having drunk alcohol in their lifetime and nearly 70% in the last year.



Will a Small Amount of Alcohol Affect Sleep?

A large Finnish study found that drinking even a small amount of alcohol can disrupt sleep, and **that the more a person drinks, the more their sleep is affected**. While alcohol negatively impacts sleep, **we recognize that it can be hard to avoid drinking entirely**. Try noting how much you currently drink and start slowly reducing the amount of alcohol you consume close to bed over time. Any amount of reduction is a step in the direction of better sleep.

The study we mentioned used a mathematical equation factoring in body weight to define drinking categories, but government organizations generally categorize alcohol consumption by how many drinks a person has per day. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture defines moderate drinking as one drink or less per day for women and two drinks or less per day for men. Heavy drinking is defined as four or more drinks on any given day for men and three or more drinks on a given day for women.

The volume of a single "drink" varies depending on the type of alcohol being consumed. For example, 12 fluid ounces of beer is considered one drink and is equivalent to 5 fluid ounces of wine or a 1.5 fluid ounce shot of liquor, like vodka or whiskey.

How to Consume Less Alcohol Before Bed

- Drink water or other non-alcoholic drinks before drinking alcohol, so you do not drink more alcoholic drinks out of thirst
- Set a limit for how many alcoholic drinks you will drink in advance, then keep track as you drink and stop once you reach your limit
- Only have a drink when you want one, and avoid taking an alcoholic drink simply because it is offered to you
- Opt for drinks with a lower alcohol percentage
- Swap out an alcoholic nightcap for something else, like chamomile tea, which may promote sleep

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