



Guide for Developing a Calming Sleep Routine

One of the most important things you can do to promote your health and wellbeing is get enough quality sleep. The key to getting a good night's sleep is to think about how to prepare your body and mind for sleep throughout the day. Follow this guide to set yourself up for getting enough sleep each night.

SET YOUR SLEEP SCHEDULE

- Go to bed at the same time each night, and get up at the same time each morning. Try to stick to it, even on the weekends and when life gets rushed. Your goal is to re-establish a restful sleep pattern.

MONITOR YOUR USE OF SCREENS

- Turn off all screens one hour before bed, or turn on settings that reduce or block the effects from harmful lights.

CREATE A SOOTHING SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

- Keep your room dark and quiet. Your body has its own natural sleeping and waking clock. It wants to be active when it's light and at rest when it's dark. Try a sleep mask or room-darkening shades to block outside light.
- Find a comfortable temperature, as extremes can disrupt your chances for good sleep. Cooler temperatures tend to be better.
- Make sure you have a "good" bed and pillow, ones that are right for you.
- Develop and practice a relaxing routine before bedtime. A warm bath, light stretching, listening to soothing music and reading are all activities that can help you find your "off switch." It is best to save intensive workouts for at least three hours before sleep, as it can energize your body and awaken your brain.
- Reserve your bed for sleep and sex only! Keep the TV, laptop, cell phone, snacks, etc. out of the bedroom.
- Don't make bedtime the time to solve your problems. Make a "to-do" list for the next day, and then try to clear your mind. Sometimes, a phrase or short poem that you can recite to yourself may help clear your mind. For example: "Don't fight with the pillow, but lay down your head, and kick every worry out of the bed."
- Take a couple slow, deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth.

PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU EAT AND DRINK

- Avoid drinking alcohol close to bedtime, since it keeps your brain in light sleep and interferes with getting to deeper, restorative sleep. You then end up sleeping in fragments and waking often.
- In the late afternoon and evening, avoid caffeinated drinks. Caffeine can remain in your system for up to 14 hours and increases nighttime awakenings.
- Avoid big meals right before bedtime, but don't go to bed hungry. Try to drink fluids at least two hours before bedtime, as a full bladder can interfere with sleep.

PLAN YOUR EXERCISE AND MOVEMENT

- Get healthy amounts of exercise every day. Moving your body during the day is a great way to prepare your body for sleep at night.
- Finding the right time of day to exercise depends on you and your body. In general, though, try to do intense workouts earlier in the day and moderate to light exercise in the evenings so as not to interrupt your brain's natural winding down before bedtime.

TIPS FOR WHEN YOU TOSS AND TURN

- If you can't fall asleep within 30 minutes, go to another room and do something restful until you feel sleepy again. Don't read in bed. If you want to read, get out of bed, and sit in a chair. Try not to expose yourself to bright, intense light, such as electronic devices, since that can "reset" your internal clock and keep you up.
- Don't have a visible bedroom clock. "Clock watching" tends to intensify the misery of sleeplessness.
- Avoid naps during the day if you are having trouble sleeping at night.