

Sleep Optimization Guide

HOLISTIC TIPS TO HELP
YOU GET A MORE RESTFUL
NIGHT'S SLEEP

WHY SLEEP MATTERS

How it works

Sleep. It's one thing we *all* seem to need more of, but most of us don't get nearly enough.

Sleep is often seen as an afterthought in our busy, fast-paced lives. Some people even brag about getting by on a few hours of sleep like it's a badge of honor!

But sleep is NOT something you want to skimp on. It affects nearly every facet of your physical and mental well-being.



Why Is Sleep Important?

Your body is hard at work while you sleep. It **repairs muscles, organs, and tissues**, and makes **proteins and hormones**. Your brain also **processes memories** and **flushes out toxins** while you snooze.

This means when you don't get enough shuteye, or your sleep quality is poor, all these processes suffer.

Most experts say **adults should aim for at least 7-8 hours of sleep every night**. But sometimes that's easier said than done.

The good news is, with the right know-how and willingness to form new habits, you *can* improve your sleep.

This guide will share simple ways to optimize your sleep, so your dreams of restful sleep can come true.

Lack of sleep can affect your:

- Brain function
- Hormones
- Weight
- Emotional well-being
- Physical performance
- Blood pressure
- Blood sugar

SLEEP HYGIENE 101

What is it?

Sleep hygiene refers to **lifestyle habits and environmental factors that can help you get a better night's sleep.**

Research shows poor sleep hygiene can increase sleep issues like insomnia, as well as daytime sleepiness and depression. On the flip side, good sleep hygiene can set the stage for a restful night's slumber.

And one simple way to improve your sleep hygiene is to set a sleep schedule, and stick to it!

Keeping a consistent sleep schedule reinforces your circadian rhythm, your body's internal 24-hour clock. The result? Better sleep.



Tips to Set Your Sleep Schedule

- **Pick fixed times.** Waking up and going to bed at different times each day throws off your body's internal clock. So do your best to stick to your sleep schedule, even on the weekends.
- **Don't overdo it on the naps.** Napping for too long can confuse your circadian rhythm and disrupt sleep later that night. If you need a nap, try to keep it to 20-30 minutes. Sleep experts say this is the sweet spot.
- **Make changes slowly.** If you decide to shift your wake time or bedtime, avoid doing it in one fell swoop. Do it gradually over several weeks to allow your internal clock to adjust.

SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

Why it matters

Your sleep environment can also help sync up your circadian rhythm.

An ideal sleep environment is three things: dark, quiet, and cool.

Keeping your bedroom this way can help you **fall asleep faster** and **prevent sleep interruptions** in the middle of the night.



How to Create an Ideal Sleep Environment

- **Block out light.** Too much light in the evening suppresses the sleep hormone melatonin. So once the sun goes down, try to keep the lights dim. And consider black-out curtains or a sleep mask to prevent light from disrupting your sleep.
- **Drown out noise.** Have a noisy pet, partner, or neighbor that's interrupting your sleep? Turn on a fan, invest in a noise machine, or pop in some ear plugs.
- **Crank down the thermostat.** The temperature drops as the sun sets in nature. Mimicking this indoors can help support sleep. According to the Sleep Foundation, the ideal sleep temp is between 65-68 degrees Fahrenheit. But it's more important to be comfortable than stick to a set temperature. Even dropping the thermostat a few degrees can signal your body it's bedtime.

NATURAL LIGHT

Why it's important

Natural light exposure, especially in the morning, can set you up for a better night's sleep.

Getting a daily dose of natural sunlight kickstarts your circadian rhythm. Research shows natural light exposure during the day may help you **fall asleep more quickly, stay asleep longer, and improve sleep quality.**



People who get a regular dose of sunlight also have more energy during the day, are less likely to suffer from depression, and are in general, just happier.

Tips for Getting Daily Sunlight

- **Rise and shine:** You get the most benefits from sunlight right when you wake up. If possible, try to head outside within the first hour of rising, even if it's just for a few minutes. You can take a quick walk, sip your coffee on your patio, or even eat your breakfast outside.
- **Aim for 5-10 minutes:** Neuroscientist Andrew Huberman says 5-10 minutes of morning sunlight on a sunny day, or 15-20 minutes on a cloudy day is ideal. But do the best you can. Even 2-3 minutes is better than nothing!
- **Take things outside:** The more sunlight you see during the day, the more it syncs up your circadian rhythm. So look for activities you can do outdoors, whether that's taking a phone call outside or eating lunch al fresco.
- **Wear sun protection.** Protect yourself from the sun's harmful UV rays with sunscreen or protective clothing.

BEDTIME ROUTINE

Wind it down

How you spend your evening hours can affect your sleep quality and how quickly you fall asleep.

That's because your brain and body need time to wind down. Having a set of bedtime rituals **signals your body that it's time to turn in, so you sleep better that night.**

Here are a few things to consider when creating your bedtime routine:



Bedtime Routine Tips

- **Make a to-do list.** Spending a few minutes on a to-do list for the next day can help lighten your mind's load before you lay down.
- **Step away from electronics.** TVs, smartphones, laptops, and other electronic devices emit blue light, which disrupts your circadian rhythm. For this reason, it's best to avoid them for 1-2 hours before bed. If you must use them, consider using blue blocker glasses or download the app [f.lux](https://www.f.lux.com/) to reduce blue light from your computer or laptop.
- **Keep it consistent.** Following specific steps in a set order before bed (i.e. brushing your teeth, putting on your PJs, etc) cues your body and brain that it's time to rest.
- **Allow 30-60 minutes.** Give yourself enough time to wind down to set the stage for restful sleep.
- **Try relaxation rituals.** Experiment with different relaxation techniques to see what helps you unwind best. Journal, read, take a bath, meditate, do some light stretches, or listen to relaxing music.

RELAXATION EXERCISES

To slide into sleep

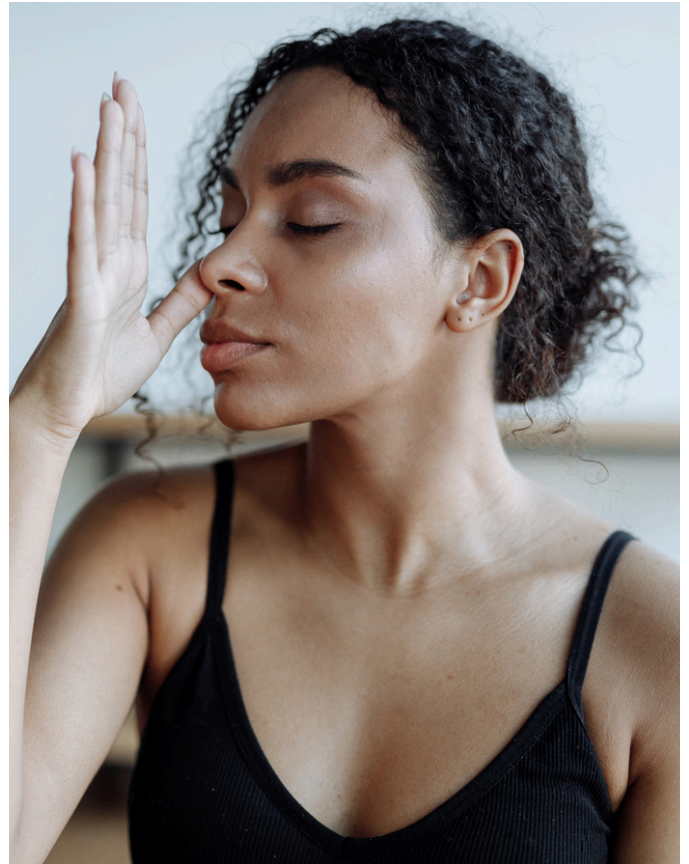
Have trouble shutting your mind off at the end of the day? Consider trying some of these relaxation techniques to help your body and mind unwind.

Deep Breathing

Slow, deep breaths trigger your body's relaxation response. Here are few breathing techniques (with demo links) that may help your body and mind relax:

- **Alternate nostril breathing**
- **4-7-8 breathing**
- **Belly breathing**
- **Box breathing**

Play around with them until you find the one that works best for you.



Relaxation techniques

Here are a few other tools that may help you relax and fall asleep faster:

- **Guided sleep meditation**
- **Progressive muscle relaxation**
- **Visualization**
- **Yoga nidra**



DIET & LIFESTYLE TIPS

To improve sleep

What you eat, drink, and how you spend your waking hours can all impact your sleep. Here are some diet and lifestyle habits that'll set you up for a restful night's sleep:

Limit water after dinner

Yes, hydration is crucial for your health and well-being. However, if you drink too much water late at night, your bladder may give you an early wake-up call. A good rule of thumb is to avoid liquids for 1-2 hours before bed.

Nix caffeine after 2 pm

That cup of coffee may perk you up in the morning. But if you drink too much caffeine later in the day, it can mess with your sleep. Caffeine can stay in your blood for 6-8 hours. So it's best to steer clear of it after 2 p.m.

Avoid evening alcohol

Having a glass of wine may help you fall asleep faster. But it can disrupt your sleep later that night. This is because alcohol affects nighttime melatonin production. For this reason, it's best to limit alcohol late at night, if not avoid it altogether.

Exercise

Exercise is one of the BEST things you can do to improve your sleep. Studies show people who exercise not only fall asleep faster, but stay asleep longer. That said, since exercise can be stimulating, it's best to avoid it 1-2 hours before bed.

Be choosy with your bed

Your bed should only be for 3 things: sleep, sex, and sickness. Following this rule trains your brain to associate your bed with sleepy time. If you do stimulating activities from bed, like work, watch TV, or scroll your phone, it may make it harder to fall asleep.

Don't eat too late

Eating too much close to bedtime can affect your sleep quality. It's best to avoid heavy meals 2-3 hours before bed. But if you're hungry, stick to a small, light snack like some nuts or Greek yogurt with fruit.