

9 proven ways to get better sleep

Many factors can interrupt and prevent a good night's sleep, such as work pressures, family responsibilities, relationship issues or illnesses. You can't control everything, but here are a few pillow-proven steps to get rest that refreshes and restores you.

1. **Stick to a sleep schedule.** Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, including weekends. Most adults need 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night, and children and adolescents need more. Figure out what you need and get it.
2. **Exercise early.** Regular activity promotes better sleep, but avoid exercising 2 to 3 hours before bedtime.
3. **Set a routine.** Cue your body that it's time to wind down by doing the same things in the same order. Maybe take a warm bath or shower, read a book or listen to soothing music.
4. **Watch what you eat.** Don't go to bed either hungry or stuffed. Avoid caffeine and nicotine. Steer clear of alcoholic drinks before bed, which may wake you up in the middle of the night.
5. **Don't lie in bed awake.** The anxiety of not being able to sleep can make it more difficult to fall asleep. If you're still awake after more than 20 minutes, do something relaxing until you feel sleepy.
6. **Limit naps.** Long daytime naps can interfere with nighttime sleep, but if needed, a 10- to 30-minute catnap in the early afternoon can boost your brain power.
7. **Tune out.** Eliminate sleep distractions such as a TV, any electronic device, bright lights, uncomfortable bed or hot temperature in the bedroom. This includes limits on how often pets or kids sleep with you.
8. **Manage stress.** If your to-do list keeps your eyes open, jot down what's on your mind and then set it aside to focus on tomorrow.
9. **Know when to contact your doctor.** If you're always tired despite spending enough time in bed at night, you may have a sleep disorder such as sleep apnea. Your physician can help identify your exact issues and provide more help, which may include therapies or sleep aid medications so you can get the rest you need.

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