

# Guidelines for Better Sleep

*Remember, the following procedures will not have an immediate effect. No significant improvement should be expected for at least two weeks.*

1. Get up at the same time each morning, seven days a week, no matter how little sleep you actually got.
2. Get into bed only when you are sleepy and intend to sleep.
3. Refrain from napping during the day.
4. Make sure your bedroom is quiet, comfortable, and safe.
5. Use your bed only for sleep (the only exception would be for sexual activity). So, for example, don't read or watch TV while sitting in bed waiting to fall asleep.
6. If you are unable to fall asleep, get up and go into another room. Do not spend more than 10 to 15 minutes awake in bed before getting up. While out of bed, do something relaxing (even boring) such as reading, watching TV, or listening to soothing music. Return to bed only when you are sleepy.
7. If, after returning to bed, you still cannot fall asleep, repeat step 6. Do this as often as necessary throughout the night.
8. Don't force it too hard or you will counteract your ability to sufficiently relax into sleep. Be patient with yourself.
9. Avoid stimulating activities immediately before getting into bed, for example activities such as exercising, having a hot shower, or arguing.
10. Make a routine of getting at least 20 minutes of aerobic exercise daily, preferably 2 to 3 hours before bedtime, but never just before getting into bed. This will help make your sleep pattern more regular.

11. If you are unable to exercise 2 to 3 hours before bedtime, instead take a long, hot soaking bath (or sit in a hot tub) 2 to 3 hours before bedtime. This will increase your body temperature so as to induce a more rapid, steep decline to the body's lowest temperature of the day, which occurs just at bedtime. The rapid, steep decline gives your body a strong signal that it is time to get sleepy.
12. Whatever relaxing activity works for you, make a routine or a ritual of it. Follow this pre-bedtime routine every night at the same time, so that your body develops a pattern of sleep cues and sleep preparedness.
13. Do not consume caffeine after 6:00 p.m. Significant amounts of caffeine are found in coffee, black teas, cola drinks, and chocolate. It would be best to limit yourself to two cups of coffee in the morning or early afternoon only.
14. Because nicotine is a stimulant, discontinue or reduce tobacco use. If you can't quit entirely, at least avoid smoking at night.
15. Do not use alcohol or other psychoactive substances. Alcohol tends to make getting to sleep easier, but staying asleep harder.
16. If you are kept awake by racing thoughts, assign a time during the day to address the concerns that fuel the racing thoughts. Then, if the racing thoughts appear when you are trying to sleep, set them aside, reminding yourself that you will continue to deal with them at the assigned time. You can also jot them down prior to getting bed, so that you get them out of your head.
17. Eat regular meals and maintain a balanced diet. A light bedtime snack may help sleep, but avoid heavy meals near bedtime. Many people find that calcium and l-tryptophan (both of which are found in milk) are naturally calming and relaxing. A glass of warm milk at night works well for many people with sleep problems.
18. Aim for quality of sleep and not quantity. An undisturbed 5-7 hours may be more restful than a fitful 8-10 hours of repeatedly waking up.