



# HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP ROUTINES

Develop sleep habits that promote a full night of sleep. Most people function best with 8 hours of sleep, but your requirement is unique to you. Sleep as long as needed to feel well-rested.

1. **Establish a Sleep Schedule** – A regular sleep schedule trains our biological clock in our brains to know when it is time for sleep and time to wake.
  - a. Have consistent regular sleeping times (i.e. 10 PM to 6 AM).
  - b. Wake up the same time each day, regardless of how poorly you slept the night before. Avoid oversleeping even on weekends or holidays.
  - c. Avoid naps, particularly in the late afternoon or evening. If you **MUST** take a nap, make it a quick 20-minute power nap.
2. **Sleep Preparation Ritual** – Develop a sedentary evening routine that begins an hour or 30 minutes before the desired bedtime.
  - a. Take a hot shower or bath - Coming out of a warm shower or bath into a cooler bedroom will cause a slight decrease in body temperature – a trigger for sleep.
  - b. Read – reading will still the mind and relax you, but be sure to read something with ink pages, not a backlit tablet. Avoid reading in bed.
  - c. Avoid mental or physical stimulation such as watching exciting TV or exercising.
  - d. Go to bed only when you feel sleepy or tired. If you do not fall asleep in 15-20 minutes, leave the bedroom and engage in one of your sleep preparation rituals. Return to bed when you feel sleepy.
3. **Consumption**- Control what you consume so that it does not interfere with your sleep.
  - a. Avoid eating within 2 hours of bed time, but don't go to bed hungry. If necessary, have a light snack, preferably warm milk.
  - b. Avoid spicy foods. Not only might this help with sleep, it may also help with heartburn or acid reflux.
  - c. Avoid fluids within 2 hours of bed time to eliminate a trip to the bathroom in the middle of the night.
  - d. Avoid caffeine late in the day, such as coffee, tea, or soft drinks. Caffeine is also present in some medications so be sure to read the label.
  - e. Avoid nicotine prior to bedtime, or quit all together.
  - f. No alcohol within four to six hours of bedtime. Some medications contain alcohol, so be sure to read the labels.
4. **Exercise** – Exercise is a great sleep inducer, when done at the right time.
  - a. Exercise late in the day but at least 4 hours prior to bedtime.
  - b. Exercise daily at the same time. This will help your body to adjust to a routine and help to induce a physical exhaustion at the end of the day.
5. **Stress** – Everyone experiences stress. Here are some tips on how to manage it:
  - a. Do not lie in bed worrying about the challenges of the upcoming day. If necessary, set aside some “worry time” a couple of hours before you go to bed. Anything you cannot resolve during that time can be put off until the next day.
  - b. Try breathing exercises – Breathe deeply and slowly, from the diaphragm while lying in bed. Inhale for six seconds and then exhale for six seconds. This slow deep breathing is a trigger to tell the body to relax.
  - c. Try relaxation exercises – One exercise is to flex and then relax muscle groups, working one group at a time until you have completed your whole body. Paired with breathing exercises, this helps your body to release tension and fully relax.