

HOW TO SLEEP WELL

Are you frustrated with your sleep habits? Do you toss and turn or have trouble turning your thoughts off? There are things you can do to sleep better.

1. Try to sleep only when sleepy.

This reduces the time you are awake in bed.

2. If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up and do something boring until you feel sleepy.

Sit quietly in the dark or read something boring. Don't expose yourself to bright light while up. The light gives the brain cues that it is time to wake up.

3. Don't take naps.

This will ensure that you are tired at bedtime. If you can't survive without your nap, have it before 3:00 pm and sleep less than one hour.

4. Get up and go to bed the same time every day.

Even on weekends! When the sleep cycle has a regular rhythm, one feels better.

5. Don't exercise for at least 4 hours before bedtime.

The timing is very important. Regular exercise is recommended, but it is best in the morning or early afternoon.

6. Develop sleep rituals.

Cues can give our body the signal it is time to slow down and sleep. Music, reading, relaxation exercises, meditation or a warm cup of milk - choose one of the above or pick one that will work for you.

7. Only use your bed for sleeping.

Try not to watch TV, pay bills, read or do work. When you are in bed the body will learn it is time for sleep. The exception is sex.

8. Stay away from caffeine, nicotine and alcohol at least 4-6 hours before bedtime.

Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants that interfere with the ability to fall asleep. Coffee, tea, cola, cocoa, chocolate and some prescription drugs contain caffeine. Cigarettes and some drugs contain nicotine. Alcohol may seem to help you sleep in the beginning as it slows brain activity, but it causes disrupted sleep.

9. Have a light snack before bed.

If the stomach is too empty, it can interfere with sleep. If the stomach is too full, it can also interfere with sleep. Dairy products and turkey contain tryptophan, which acts as a natural sleep aid. Warm milk is a great snack with flavoring that does not contain caffeine.

10. Take a hot bath 90 minutes before bedtime.

A hot bath raises the body temperature. It is the drop in temperature after that may assist in feeling sleepy.

11. Make sure your bed and bedroom are quiet and comfortable.

A hot room can be uncomfortable. A cooler room with enough blankets to keep warm is recommended. If light in the early morning bothers you, get a blackout shade or wear a slumber mask. If noise bothers you, wear earplugs or get a "white noise" machine.

12. Use sunlight to set your biological clock.

As soon as you get up in the morning, go outside and turn yourself towards the sun for about 15 minutes. Don't look directly at the sun.