

15 WAYS TO GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

1. **EXERCISE:** Exercise during the day, preferably in the late afternoon before dinner. Don't exercise within 4 hours of going to bed. Aerobic exercise (not necessarily "aerobics," but the type that gets your heart beating and gets you sweating for 20 minutes or more) is best, but 45 minutes to an hour of brisk walking will work.
2. **REGULAR BEDTIME/WAKE TIME:** Go to bed and get up at regular times, even if you're tired in the morning. Don't vary your time of going to bed or getting up. However, if you have consistent sleep problems, then try getting up half an hour earlier in the morning than your usual time; it may help you get to sleep that night.
3. **DON'T FIGHT & FRET ABOUT SLEEPLESSNESS:** Don't try to make yourself sleep. If you're unable to fall asleep after 20-30 minutes, leave your bed, engage in some relaxing activity (such as watching TV, sitting in a chair and listening to a relaxation tape, or having a cup of herbal tea), and do not return to bed until you're sleepy. Repeat until you fall asleep. Also, work to not worry, get upset, fight, or fear sleeplessness. Even if tired the next day, your adrenaline should keep you functioning adequately for the tasks you most need to accomplish.
4. **MEALS BEFORE SLEEP:** No heavy meals right before bedtime. Avoid stimulating or spicy foods. Eat a small snack about two hours before bedtime. A good choice would be a banana, low-fat milk with cereal or peanut butter on toast. Some people also find drinking a glass of milk 30 minutes before sleeping is helpful.
5. **NO STIMULANTS:** Avoid alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, sugar or other stimulants within 4 hours of going to bed. Avoid even moderate use during the day. If you must have caffeine, have it only in the AM, and have small amounts. If you continue to have problems, stop drinking coffee and caffeine completely – but wean yourself slowly.
6. **SLEEP RITUAL:** Develop a 30-minute or more sleep ritual before bedtime. This is a relaxing activity you do every night in the same order at about the same time before you get into bed. Avoid vigorous physical or mental activity and emotional upsets. A hot shower, bath, or other relaxing or inspirational reading activity may be helpful. In addition, recent research has shown that wearing very warm socks as you get ready to sleep (and then taking them off as you get into bed) can increase the body's readiness to sleep.
7. **TIME-IN-BED RESTRICTION:** Cut down on time in bed not sleeping. Estimate average total hours currently actually sleeping, i.e.-6 hours. Determine time of day you wake up, i.e., 8am. Subtract sleep hours from the wake time (i.e., 8am-6hours =2am.) Go to bed at this time. (Do not do less than 5.5 hours.) Make sure to get up at the regular wake time, and take no naps. When you sleep 85% or more of the time in bed, increase the time in bed by 15 minutes—repeat until sleep time greatly increased.
8. **THE BED IS FOR SLEEP:** Eliminate non-sleep activities in bed (such as reading or doing other work) to strengthen associations between your bed and sleeping (unless these other activities are part of your sleep ritual.)
9. **RELAXATION:** Use relaxation techniques, such as slow, deep breathing or tensing/relaxing muscles. [Some relaxation tips are found at: http://www.hws.edu/studentlife/resources/counseling/relax.asp](http://www.hws.edu/studentlife/resources/counseling/relax.asp)
10. **MEDICAL:** Get a full physical from a physician to rule out medical problems or medication side-effects. Also, for persistent sleep problems or daytime fatigue, a physician can refer you to a sleep center for further testing.
11. **AVOID SLEEPING PILLS:** Non-prescription sleeping pills (or other sleep-inducing medications) are very addictive. Use only as a last resort and only for one-two nights. See a physician for non-addictive sleep medication if necessary.
12. **NAPS:** Only take quick "power" naps no longer than 20 minutes and no later than the afternoon.
13. **THOUGHTS:** Keep a notebook by your bed. If something is on your mind, you can get some peace by writing it down, knowing it will be there when you wake up. Then, focus on positive thoughts.
14. **SLEEPING ENVIRONMENT:** Reduce noise through the use of ear plugs or a noise-masking machine (available at Radio Shack). Remove or turn off potentially distracting noises, like answering machines or ticking clocks. Keep your room at a comfortable temperature if possible. Also, keep your room as dark as possible, and get comfortable sheets, blankets, pillows, pillowcases, and pajamas/clothes to sleep in.
15. **MENTAL HEALTH:** Use techniques on reverse side on Stress and Sadness, or talk to a therapist to rule out any psychological causes of sleep disturbance.