

# Top tips to create healthy sleep habits



Sleeping troubles can have a significant impact on our well-being whether individuals are experiencing short-term or long-term difficulties. Short-term insomnia is known as acute insomnia and can occur over a period that lasts less than three months. When insomnia occurs for more than three months, this is considered chronic insomnia and can lead to more serious health concerns.

It is recommended that individuals seek professional support when experiencing sleep troubles and to maintain healthy sleep habits. Here are key suggestions to improve your sleep habits and get the rest you need:

## Keep a consistent sleep schedule

Our bodies crave routine, and sleep is no different. Set your internal clock by waking up at the same time each day and going to bed at more or less the same time each night. Start your day as soon as you wake up rather than lingering in bed. Seeing daylight and starting your morning routine will signal your body to start building the drive for the next night's sleep, which will pay off at bedtime.

## Stay active

Regular exercise is great for mood and anxiety and it's important for sleep, too. Exercise helps your body build the drive for deep sleep. Try to time your exercise for earlier in the day and get your heart rate up when you do. Vigorous exercise too late in the day may leave you overly activated when bedtime rolls around.

## Skip the nap

Avoiding daytime naps helps you preserve maximum sleepiness for bedtime. Naps may confuse the body and prevent consistent sleep schedules from being developed. Further, keep in mind that naps that are longer than an hour may cause you to fall into deep sleep which is harder to wake from and those deep sleep cycles cause confusion.

## Pay attention to your caffeine, alcohol or nicotine intake

All of these can interfere with your sleep if taken too close to bedtime. The goal is to avoid any stimulants that prevent you from falling asleep and letting your sympathetic nervous system rest so you can achieve that deep sleep you need.

## Create a bedtime routine

We all need a buffer between our daytime activities and sleep time. Take 30 to 60 minutes to shift from daytime mode and set the stage for sleep. This is a good time to get off screens, take a break from the news, and do something pleasant or relaxing such as reading, stretching, doing relaxation exercises, meditating or having a hot shower or bath.

### Reserve your bed for sleep

As much as you can, keep your sleeping space separate from your working or hanging out space. Do not use your bed for anything other than sleep (although you may want to make an exception for sexual activity). This will help train your brain to associate your bed and bedroom with the sleep response – and not with wakeful activities like watching TV, looking at devices, worrying or planning. The same principle applies if you are having extended trouble falling asleep or are up in the night. If you find yourself tossing and turning in bed for more than 20 minutes, get up and do something calming or boring until you feel sleepy enough to return.

### And lastly... don't sweat it!

Ever tried extra hard to get to sleep? If so, you probably noticed that the harder you try, the more elusive sleep becomes, the more anxious you become about sleep, and so on. Watching the clock and doing mental calculations in the night are counterproductive for sleep. So are dire predictions about how changes to your sleep will affect your daytime functioning or your future in general. Challenge these fears. Many of us struggle, but your body is designed to produce the sleep you need. Most sleep problems get better over time, especially if you stick to the tips above.

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**Support is always available for you if you experience any life challenges. Reach out to our experts whenever you feel the need.**

