



11 Dreamy Ways to Sleep Better

Want to be healthier, feel better, and live longer? Get 7 to 8 hours

of sleep a night, or the equivalent if you do shift work. Here are 11 ways to sleep better:

1. Ban digital devices before bed.

Shut off the TV, computer, tablet, phone, and any other digital devices an hour before bed. The light from their screens excites brain activity that can keep you from drifting off to dreamland.

2. Create a bedtime routine.

Do something before you go to sleep each night to help you get ready for bed. Take a warm bath. Read a book. Listen to soothing music. Make it a habit. It will help you relax and fall asleep faster.

3. Plan for Zzzs. Go to bed at the same time every night, even on weekends. When you stick to a regular sleep schedule, you'll sleep better.

4. Stage your room for sleep. Your bedroom should be dark, quiet, comfortable, and cool. Remove distractions like a TV, computer, or digital devices. Make sure your pillow, bedding, and sheets are comfortable.

5. Move more, sit less. Exercise helps reduce stress and improve mood. People who exercise fall asleep faster and sleep better than those who don't. Just don't exercise right before bed, or you'll be wide awake, not sleepy.

6. See the sun. Try to get outside in natural sunlight for at least 30 minutes a day. Sun exposure helps increase melatonin levels in the part of your brain that controls sleep.

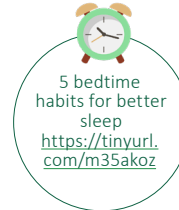
7. Curb the caffeine. Avoid coffee and other caffeinated drinks 6 to 8 hours before bed.

8. Avoid alcohol. It may make you feel drowsy. But alcohol can cause sleep problems. You wake up after a few hours and can't get back to sleep. Or your sleep isn't as deep, so you miss out on REM sleep. You might snore more

9. Munch meals earlier. Avoid eating late in the day and going to bed soon after stepping away from the table. Most people don't sleep well with a full stomach.

10. Can't sleep? Get up. If you can't fall asleep within 15 to 20 minutes after turning out the lights, get up. Do something to help you relax. Repeat your bedtime routine, and try again.

11. Get medical help. If you can't sleep, talk to your doctor. Some medications like steroids, pain relievers, and over-the-counter medicine can disrupt sleep. Your doctor can also diagnose and treat sleep disorders to help you get your Zzzs.



The Problem with a Sleep-Starved Lifestyle



Stay up late to watch your favorite TV show, or binge-watch an entire series. Work late. Help kids with homework. Go out with friends. Skimp on sleep.

Ever feel like you're living a sleep-starved lifestyle?

The occasional late-night might leave you feeling tired and groggy the next day. But that's minor compared to the long-term impact of poor sleep. Research shows that lack of sleep (less than 7 to 8 hours) on a regular basis can lead to:²

Diabetes. Lack of sleep causes blood sugar levels to rise. High levels cause your body to produce more insulin. Long-term, that's a recipe for type 2 diabetes.

Heart disease. If you don't get enough sleep on a regular basis, your risk for a heart attack goes up. It also raises your risk for high blood pressure. And that's a problem. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S.

Obesity. Stay up late, eat more junk food. It happens. But it's not the only reason poor sleep can lead to obesity. Lack of sleep can also slow metabolism and increase hormones linked to hunger and food cravings.

Depression. Data shows that lack of sleep raises the risk for depression and other mood disorders by 22 percent.³

Early death. Want to live a long and healthy life? Get enough sleep. Research suggests lack of sleep raises your risk for early death.⁴

References

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