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Ways to Get a Good Night's Sleep

If your sleep is disturbed more than three times a week, and the trouble has gone on for at least a month, discuss it with your doctor; he or she might recommend a sleep specialist. If, however, your sleep problems are not too severe, or are the result of poor sleep habits, read on.

1 Make your bedroom a haven.

Is your mattress as soft or as firm as you like? Are your bedclothes comfortable? Temperature and humidity OK? Is the room quiet and dark enough for you? (Wear earplugs or a mask if need be.)

2 Come up with a bedtime routine.

Go to bed at about the same time every night, and follow the same routine so your body will know you're ready to bed down. Dim the lights, drink a cup of herbal tea—or take a bath, read or listen to music to smooth the way from wakefulness to sleepiness.

3 Get up at around the same time each morning, weekends too.

Such constancy will reinforce your biological clock's sleep-wake cycle. Use your bed for sleeping. Move the TV (computer, tablet or smartphone) out of the bedroom; also don't read, talk on the phone, or snack in bed.

4 Don't lie in bed and stare at the ceiling.

If you can't fall asleep after a while, or if you wake up in the middle of the night, get up and read, listen to music or do some deep breathing to encourage sleep. (But do not exercise!)

5 Eliminate daytime naps.

Some people get quite drowsy in the afternoons and doze off for a while. But if they do take a nap, they may have trouble sleeping that night—and so the following day, they'll have to take another nap to make up for the previous night's lost sleep.



6 Exercise regularly.

Exercising in the daytime can help you feel tired and relaxed in the evening. If you're not already exercising, ask your doctor to help you devise a workout. Avoid exercising within three hours of bedtime, since vigorous activity at that time can drive away sleep.

7 Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol.

All three of these drugs can cause poor-quality sleep, particularly if consumed late in the day. Smokers often experience troublesome withdrawal symptoms while trying to sleep; caffeine stays in the body for many hours before it can be eliminated; and alcohol is actually a stimulant that can also disrupt sleep.

8 If your partner snores loudly or thrashes around while asleep...

either move to a different room or ask him or her to see a doctor. Snoring can often be due to some treatable medical condition like a sinus blockage, thyroid imbalance, sleep apnea or obesity. Jerking and thrashing may be due to restless leg syndrome.

9 Use sleeping pills only as a last—and temporary—resort.

In certain circumstances, hypnotic medications may be useful for sleeplessness but they're not a replacement for good sleep habits. If your insomnia has gotten to the point where sleeping pills are sounding like a good solution, talk with your doctor.

Additional Resources

Center for Workplace Mental Health

<http://workplacementalhealth.org>

National Institute of Mental Health

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/find-help/index.shtml>

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

<http://www.nami.org>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>

Mental Health.gov

<https://www.mentalhealth.gov>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

National Council for Behavioral Health

<https://www.thenationalcouncil.org>

Veterans & Families – Mental Health Resources

<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov>

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH)

<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/stress>