

If you don't snooze, you lose



The amount of sleep you get plays a major role in how you manage stress. The average adult needs seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Are you getting your 40 winks?

Stress is the number one cause of short-term sleeping difficulties. Try these tips and record your sleep activity in a sleep diary.

Go to bed and get up at the same time

Your brain and body need to balance sleep and wake time. Although it's tempting to sleep in on the weekends, a regular wake time in the morning strengthens your body and enhances sleep onset at night. So try not to vary your schedule often.

Set a regular bedtime routine

A relaxing, bedtime routine helps separate sleep time from active time. Try a hot bath, light reading or listening to soothing music.

Use your bedroom only for sleep

Remove televisions, computers and work materials from your room. Use your bed only for sleep and relaxation.

Create a comfortable, quiet, dark and cool environment

Your bedroom should entice you to sleep. Make certain that your mattresses and pillows are comfortable. Consider using blackout curtains, eye shades, ear plugs, humidifiers and fans to help you achieve these effects.



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Good night, sleep tight



Avoid heavy meals close to bedtime

Eating and drinking too much may make you less comfortable when settling down for bed and may cause heartburn.

Exercise each day

Regular physical activity helps make it easier to fall asleep and contributes to sounder sleep. Complete your physical activity at least three hours before bedtime to prevent difficulty falling asleep.

Stay away from caffeine

Caffeine is a stimulant and can remain in the body on average three to five hours. Avoid caffeine (chocolate, coffee, tea and soft drinks) closer to bedtime.

Give up your tobacco products

Smoking before bed makes it difficult to fall asleep. When smokers and tobacco users go to sleep, they experience withdrawal symptoms from nicotine, which also causes sleep problems. Nicotine can cause difficulty falling asleep, problems waking in the morning and may also cause nightmares.

Shy away from alcohol

Contrary to popular belief, alcohol disrupts sleep and causes you to wake up during the night.

If you continue to experience sleep problems, share your sleep diary with your physician for proper diagnosis and treatment.

Personalized sleep information is available at your fingertips—all you have to do is ask. The Personal Health Manager's *Ask A Nurse* feature provides timely answers to your e-mailed questions. Find this and many other wellness resources through Blue Access[®] for Members.