



20 Tips for a good night's sleep

Many people have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, or both. There are a few lucky people who just drop off to sleep as soon as their heads hit the pillow, but most of us need some time to wind down. Here are some tips for getting a good night's sleep:

1. **Make a commitment to getting a good night's sleep.** Even if you're just going to try it for a short time to see if it makes a difference, give it a high priority and a fair go.
2. **Ensure your bedroom is dark and quiet.** If there is a street light or some other source of light (even moonlight) hang some thick curtains. Consider earplugs if you have a partner who snores or loud neighbors. This is particularly important if you are a shift worker and have to sleep when the sun is up.
3. **Have a regular bed time and stick to it** - it works for the kids as well as for the grown-ups. Having a regular bedtime allows your body to adjust to a schedule and makes it easier to fall asleep.
4. **Plan to sleep for 8 hours.** Having a bedtime of 11pm isn't going to give you enough time to sleep if you have to get up at 5am.
5. **Go to bed well before midnight.** Remember that better quality sleep occurs in the hours before midnight, so it's better to go to bed at 10 and sleep to 6, than to go to bed at 11 and sleep to 7, even though it is the same amount of time overall
6. **Have a routine before you go to bed.** It might be a relaxing bath or a cup of hot (herbal) tea, but having a way of telling your body it's time to start shutting off for the night is very helpful.
7. **Go for a walk during the day or do some other kind of physical activity for at least 30 minutes every day.** If that seems too much, try doing something for just 10 minutes at first. Even a small change can help.
8. **Limit caffeine throughout the day, and especially after 4pm.** Be aware that caffeine is in more than just tea and coffee. Most soft drinks and all energy drinks have caffeine, sometimes in large doses. Even if

you're one of those people who can drink coffee and then fall straight to sleep, you may be surprised by how much better you sleep without that cup.

9. **Avoid smoking after 6pm.** This allows the stimulants in cigarettes to clear your system before you try to sleep.
10. **Avoid excessive alcohol** (more than one standard drink for women or 2 standard drinks for men). Drinking may help you relax, but excessive alcohol makes it harder to stay asleep and it provides lower quality sleep.
11. **Try to do something quiet to wind down before bed**, like reading a magazine, taking a relaxing bath or listening to soft music.
12. **Avoid watching TV or eating in bed.** It's important to make bed a place for rest, so you're mind and body expect to rest while you're there.
13. **If you like to watch TV late into the night, get a VCR and record your shows.** Not only will you be able to sleep more, you'll save time by buzzing through the ads.
14. **If you find you're thinking about daytime things, try watching your thoughts go by, like clouds in the sky or cars on the road, rather than getting caught up in them.** This isn't as easy as it sounds. It takes practice. You may want to try some mindfulness training to help develop this skill.
15. **Close your eyes.** It may seem obvious, but the mind is more active when it has more input. Closing your eyes, especially rolling your eyes up past the ridge at the top of your eye sockets, sends a signal to your brain to shut off.
16. **Stay in bed.** If you wake up during the night, try to stay in bed and keep your eyes closed. It's best not to get up; because it will provide more mental stimulation than if you stay in bed. If your thoughts are so compelling you can't let them go, get a pen and paper and write them down. Then fold the paper and place it under your bed. Remind yourself that the thoughts will still be there in the morning and you'll be more prepared to deal with them after a good night's sleep.
17. **Valerian root** is a herb that is reputed to promote sleep and several products are on the market now that have it. **Chamomile Tea** also has a good reputation for calming the nerves and promoting sleep. **Lavender essential oil** has soporific (sleep-inducing) qualities. Put a drop on your pillow or pajamas or a few drops in your bath.
18. **Avoid long naps during the day** (more than 15 minutes) if you're having trouble sleeping at night. It may make you feel better in the short term, but it isn't a replacement for the long, deep, restful sleep that can only happen at night.
19. **Try a relaxation tape or CD.** Some people need the added bonus of a relaxation tape to promote sleep.
20. **Counseling may be helpful.** Poor sleep can be the result of anxiety and depression. If you think you might have some problems in this regard, consult your doctor or a psychologist.

If you are a shift worker and don't sleep at night, you may need good sleep more than the lucky ones who do sleep at night. Try to consider the list above as a guide and substitute the word night to suit yourself.

<http://www.clearwatercentre.com.au/healthy-body/healthy-sleep/20-tips-for-a-good-nights-sleep/>