

Sweet Dreams: Tips for Better Sleep

Sleep quantity and quality impacts your health! Aim for 7-9 hours each night.



Why

The impacts of poor sleep touch almost every aspect of your health. Insufficient sleep is associated with decreases in your productivity, attention and focus, memory, emotional regulation, and even your likability. It can make digestive symptoms and conditions like Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), and acid reflux worse. Other areas of health like your immune system, mental health, and ability to manage your weight also suffer when your sleep is sub-optimal.

Sleep Cycles

To achieve true, high-quality rest, your body moves through 4 sleep cycles that last between 70-120 minutes (or 1-2 hours) each. Each sleep stage plays a role in restoration.

- **Stage 1:** you are easily awakened, your muscles relax and may twitch, and slow eye movement may occur.
- **Stage 2:** your body temperature drops, your brain waves slow down, and eye movement stops.
- **Stage 3 (deep sleep):** hormones are released, energy is restored, tissue grows and repairs, muscles relax, and blood pressure drops.
- **Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep:** is associated with dreaming, memory consolidation, and creativity. REM sleep plays an important role in energizing your mind and body.

Effective sleep hygiene practices support your body's ability to efficiently cycle between these sleep stages, so you can get the quality sleep your brain and body needs.

Tips for Better Sleep

Cylinder

1

Optimize your Nutrition for Sleep

Follow a Mediterranean pattern of eating, eat complex carbohydrates 2-4 hours before bed, and aim to eat balanced meals and snacks.

2

Nutrition - Minimize or Avoid

Avoid simple carbohydrates, avoid eating 30-60 minutes before bed, and cut back on caffeine, alcohol, and spicy foods (if they're a problem).

3

Create a Sleep-Friendly Bedroom

Shoot for cool, dark, comfortable, and have a consistent noise. Your bedroom should be cozy and cool (around 68 degrees) with dim lights on for the hour leading up to bedtime.

4

Exercise Regularly

Regular movement and activity throughout the day can support restful sleep. However, avoid intense exercise within 3 hours of bedtime.

5

Create Morning and Evening Routines

Routines reset your circadian rhythm to set you up for better sleep. Establish calming habits like stretching, reading, or journaling before bed. Get exposure to sunlight or a light therapy box first thing in the morning.

6

Skip Sleep Zappers

Go screen-free 30-60 minutes before bed and cut back or eliminate substances that can negatively impact your sleep like alcohol and nicotine.

7

Seek Professional Help

If you're regularly using sleep aids or you've tried all these tips without success, seek professional help.