



Getting A Better Night's Sleep

Reduce Stress - Improve Memory -
Boost Mental & Physical Well Being

Did you know that sleeping at least eight hours a night decreases the risks of obesity, cardiovascular disease, and type II diabetes? Good quality sleep is an essential component of your good health. Sadly, it's also one of the last things most of us think about when trying to increase productivity.

However, just like eating right, staying hydrated, and exercising moderately, getting a better night's sleep should be one of the first improvements you make to create a healthy and productive lifestyle for yourself.

A better night's sleep will also help you reduce stress, improve your memory, and boost your mood – in addition to all the physical health benefits. When you think about it, the idea of losing weight, being healthier, and reducing stress just by sleeping better at night sounds like science fiction. But it's not. Let's learn more about how you can get a better night's sleep so that you can get all these benefits.

How Much Sleep Do We Really Need?

You'll see a lot of people claim that they don't need much sleep. However, the truth is most of us need a lot more than we get. There are a few lucky people who, due to their genetics and a rare gene mutation, can function normally on just six hours of sleep each night.

But, six hours is still a good chunk of sleeping for many people today due to the high demands on time. Let's explore more about how much sleep you really need each night and then learn how to ensure you get it.

Sleep Seven to Nine Hours Each Night

When it comes to getting enough sleep, while it does vary slightly for different people, most of us (as adults) need between seven and nine hours of sleep each night. The only way to be sure that you're getting enough sleep for yourself is to experiment, but start with the longest period – not the shortest.

Sleep Quality Matters Too

Technically, a person getting enough sleep each night should be able to fall asleep within about 20 minutes without any issues and wake up within 20 minutes when the alarm goes off without much of a struggle. Then, you should be able to get through your day with enough energy to be as productive as you need to be.

About Segmented Sleep

Some people have experimented with the idea of sleeping in two chunks instead of one long night. This idea has come about mostly because many of us have lifestyles that

aren't conducive to sleeping nine hours a night, and history shows that two sleeping shifts were common in some households in the past.

During the most extended sleeping, prehistoric people would visit friends, have sex, pray, and do other calming activities during the sleep break. Not much can be done without sunlight, so nothing too active. Then after a couple of hours, they would go back to sleep until sunrise.

The main thing to understand about that past is that we did not have electricity then, and therefore night-time was longer due to not having artificial lighting. With this standard, they were often really sleeping about ten hours a night, in two approximately five-hour shifts. Additionally, people did not have regular jobs like they do now and instead lived off the land, and their time was used differently.

This method of sleeping can work for people who don't need or want to live in the daily schedule that exists for most people who have typical day jobs and a normal nightlife. So, if you have an open schedule, it can work for you. Aim for two five-hour shifts, which should result in at least the seven to nine hours of sleep you need each 24 hours.

The main thing to do is to figure out what works best for your lifestyle. More than likely, due to how people live today, it's easier for you to stick to a regular night-time sleeping schedule and daytime working schedule.

However, don't force it; if you try something and after a couple months, you're not experiencing the good health and energy you hoped, try something new. Regardless of when you sleep, getting your sleep environment right is the ultimate way to ensure you can get the quality sleep you need.

Getting Your Sleep Environment Right

No matter what time you plan to sleep, creating an environment conducive to sleep is essential. You really do need to ensure that wherever you sleep is the right temperature, is comfortable to sleep in, and makes you want to sleep. That really does mostly start with your mattress.

Get the Right Bed and Mattress

Choosing the right mattress to sleep on requires that you know your budget, your sleep position, and understand your own physical conditions that may interfere with your ability to sleep.

- **Know the Type of Mattresses You Like** – If you like a bed with some bounce to it, you'll need to choose an innerspring mattress, while if you like a firm mattress, you'll want to choose memory foam. If you like something that offers both, you can choose an innerspring mattress with a memory foam topper. Some mattresses are filled with

air, like the Sleep Number bed made famous by night-time commercials and the bionic woman; this allows you to control the firmness of the mattress along with your partner.

- **Know Your Sleeping Style** – Believe it or not, the position you like to sleep in matters in terms of the type of mattress and pillows you buy. For example, if you want to sleep on your side, you may need an innerspring over a foam mattress because it may lessen the pressure points you feel on your hips and shoulders. If you sleep on your tummy, you will need a firmer mattress too, because you don't want to suffocate inside a soft memory foam option.
- **Sleeping Temperature** – If you tend to be a hot sleeper, it's essential to be mindful of this when choosing a mattress. Many memory foam mattresses have a reputation of warming up quite a bit and causing people who are hot sleepers to be even hotter. If you really want a memory foam but you're a hot sleeper, find one of the newer "cooling" options.
- **Dealing with Allergies** -- If you have allergies to dust, pets, or the environment, finding a mattress that doesn't add to it is very helpful. Memory foam is antimicrobial, as well as resistant to dust mites and mold. Innerspring mattresses will need to be covered with an allergy-resistant cover to help avoid the same problems. If you do have sensitivities, you'll also want to check whether your choice is certified regarding different materials.

Don't choose something as important as a mattress on the spur of the moment. Give it a lot of thought and go to real stores to try out a mattress before ordering. Try to purchase mattresses that offer a long return option so that you don't waste your money. A good mattress should last between five and ten years.

Set the Room Temperature Colder

This is one of the more difficult parts to control because it will affect your budget, and it really depends on what type of home you live in. But, the ideal temperature for most people to sleep is about 60 to 67 degrees Fahrenheit.

- **Circadian Rhythms** – For most healthy individuals, keeping the room cooler is conducive to regulating your biological clock. Sleeping in a room that is not cool enough can disturb your natural rhythms and make it harder to get good sleep.
- **Allergies** – If you are prone to allergies, keeping your room on the colder side of the range (around 61 degrees Fahrenheit) is an excellent way to reduce allergy problems. If this requires the use of an air conditioner, it will reduce humidity, which is also a way to reduce allergens and dust mites.

- **Blankets** – Most of us sleep a lot better cuddled up in soft blankets. This requires that you make the room cooler so that you can cover up. This may seem counterproductive, but it's just a fact. Some people love using weighted blankets too.
- **Sleeping Longer** – When the room is kept colder, it will enable you to fall asleep faster and stay asleep much longer than if you didn't control the temperature of the room. Your body naturally reduces its temperature as it prepares for sleep, so doing it by room temperature will help too.
- **Sleep Quality** – When the room is on the colder side and you use the right blankets and mattress, you'll avoid night sweats and other issues that can disrupt your sleep. As you near waking moments, your body will naturally heat up.
- **Health and Aging** – Studies show that sleeping in a room between 60 and 68 degrees Fahrenheit will help your body to naturally produce more of the hormone melatonin, which is also associated with anti-aging. By the way, melatonin also improves your sleep quality.
- **Help with Metabolism** – Just like your body releases the hormone melatonin during sleep if it's cool enough, your body also uses the sleeping time to process fat. It's a complex process but know that your body will store the right type of fat, which increases your resting caloric burn rate.

As you can see, not only will a cooler room temperature in your bedroom help you sleep better, but the health advantages of keeping your room cooler are genuinely amazing too. Who knew you could get healthy, lose weight, and improve your health just by sleeping well each night in a cool room?

Set the Mood for Sleeping

The other aspect that affects sleeping is the mood of your room. This includes how you have it decorated and what you use it for. In general, your bedroom should be set up in a way that makes it clear to your mind that you are supposed to be resting and sleeping. You can do this in a variety of ways that don't break the bank.

- **Make the Space Peaceful** – Everyone has a different idea about what is peaceful, but you can look to color theory to find the right color palette that you like and that is also peaceful and serene. In general, the colors of nature, shades of green and blue, will provide the most tranquil space.
- **Keep Work Out of Your Bedroom** – Even if you do have a home office, and even if it must be in the bedroom, try to make your room as work-free as possible by the time it's sleeping time. Hide the work area behind a room divider so that you cannot see it when you're in your bed.

- **Clear Away All the Clutter** – Any type of clutter and disorganization will cause stress and anxiety. It's best if you set up your room so that everything has a place, and it's easy to keep clutter down.
- **Ensure That It Gets Very Dark** – When you choose window treatments, get blackout shades and liners so that you can make the room very dark. You don't want lights shining in the window to disturb your slumber.
- **Set Up Fans and Ventilation** – You want to keep the room cool and feeling fresh. Avoid having fans blow right on your face, but keeping a gentle breeze flowing in the bedroom helps improve sleep quality.
- **Buy the Best Sheets You Can Afford** – The best sheets are really are just good high thread count 100 percent cotton sheets. However, today there are more types of sheets that you can consider trying. Anything wicking and cooling is helpful.
- **Get the Right Mattress and the Pillows** – As discussed above, investing in a good mattress and pillows based on your sleeping style is also essential for setting the right mood for sleeping. You don't need to replace them often, so spending more money here can really pay off.
- **Clean Up Your Room Daily** – Set a schedule for cleaning your room so that it stays dust- and clutter-free. Since you are going to avoid doing more than sleeping, resting, and making love in the room, it shouldn't be that much work.

When you set the mood for sleeping, you ensure that you use the space for what is intended, which is to get restful and restorative sleep every single night of your life.

Getting your sleep environment right requires that you understand what you need to get a good night's rest and being willing to invest in it. Investing in your health is always worth it. Sleeping better each night will ensure that you are at your best every day, both mentally and physically.

The Best Bedtime Routine Do's and Don'ts

One way to ensure more restful night-time sleep is to set up a bedtime routine that works for you. Here are a few bedtime do's and don'ts that you may want to consider as you set yourself up for better sleep.

Do: Stop Electronics Two Hours before Bed

So many people like watching movies before bed, but the truth is, falling asleep to movies and technology is counterproductive when it comes to ensuring a good night's sleep. Turn off your electronics at least two hours before bed and focus on low-tech, quiet activities at that point.

Do: Create a Quiet Environment

Now that you've shut down technology, it's time to quieten down the environment. While you do need to turn off your technology, it's okay to listen to a little slow and calming music in the background two hours before bedtime. However, you want the environment quiet once you lay down to sleep.

The music at the end of the day shouldn't be anything energizing or that you want to sing along with, though. The point is to create a quiet, calming environment. Maybe listen to nature sounds if you cannot take silence yet. You really do want to work toward silence two hours before bedtime.

Do: Take a Warm Bath or Shower

Most people in today's hard-working environment tend to shower in the morning before work. It helps with the hairstyling and other factors, but the truth is, bathing before bed is a lot more beneficial to a good night's sleep. In many cultures, like Japan, it's a tradition to soak in a warm bath before bed.

A warm bath gets all the germs, pollen, and other environmental contaminants off you. Also, a warm bath or shower can be very relaxing for your muscles and help you sleep. You don't have to wash your hair to take a warm bath before bed. You can still do that in the morning if you prefer.

Don't: Use Caffeine before Bed

Using caffeine after about 2 pm is not going to help most people sleep better. Avoid it permanently if you can, but if you can't, at least avoid it after 2 pm. If you are having issues with insomnia, you may need to stop even earlier than that.

Try other types of drinks that don't have caffeine. For example, if it's cold where you are, instead of sipping on hot tea, try using just hot lemon water. You'll still be warmed up, but you won't be adding anything to your digestive tract to make sleeping harder.

Don't: Drink Alcohol before Bed

Likewise, you should not drink alcohol before bed either. Try not to have any type of alcohol after 6 pm as it can interfere with your circadian rhythm. Even if you think you're sleeping better due to the relaxation, you're not.

If you like to drink wine with your meal, that's okay, but if you find that you have insomnia, you may have to eliminate alcohol from most of your days. Everyone reacts differently to alcohol, but most people will benefit by giving it up before bed.

Don't: Drink Liquids before Bed

One of the worst offenders in getting a good night's rest is getting up to pee. If you want to avoid this, make sure you use the toilet right before you get into the bed, but also avoid drinking any liquids at least one hour before bedtime.

Don't allow yourself to be dehydrated before bed to avoid getting up each night, though. Ensure that you mind your hydration all day long so that you don't need anything right before bed that will require you to get up.

Do: Optimize Your Bedroom

Turn your bedroom into a sleeping sanctuary. Get the best mattress you can afford as well as the best window treatments, sheets, pillows, and so forth. When it's all designed to help you relax and get more sleep, you will get more sleep.

Make your bedroom an oasis for sleeping and relaxation. When you do this, you'll notice the moment you go inside your room that you start to feel relaxed. The colors of paint you choose, the bedding you pick, and the mood you set all make a big difference in the quality of your sleep.

Do: Set Your Bedroom Temperature Cooler

If you don't have an air conditioner in your bedroom yet, you may want to consider investing in one for your wall or window, depending on where you live. As mentioned earlier, keeping your room temperature between 60 and 68 degrees is optimal for the best high-quality sleep.

Not only is setting the temperature colder good for helping you sleep but it's also helpful to your body overall – helping you get over colds and allergies, and encouraging proper hormone production.

Don't: Eat Two Hours Before

Just like drinking can interfere with sound sleep, so can eating. You don't want to go to sleep hungry, but you also don't want to sleep when you are still digesting food. Try to limit food two hours before bedtime at the minimum to avoid needing to get up to use the toilet or other issues.

If you find that you are feeling hungry right at the two-hour mark, go ahead and have a tiny high-protein snack such as a slice of cheese or a handful of nuts, so that you don't experience hunger while trying to fall asleep. But aim not to eat closer to bedtime than that.

Do: Get Relaxed

Set up your environment so that the last couple of hours of the evening are dedicated to relaxation. That's when you can take your night-time bath, enjoy a good book while curled up in your fluffy robe, and maybe even do a little meditation, to set the mood in your mind to relax and get rest.

Make that last two hours before sleeping a relaxing time for you and your entire family. Keep your voices down, keep the lighting dim, and make everything focused on relaxation.

The most crucial aspect of your night-time routine is that you should ensure it is focused on the main point, which is to sleep soundly at night as long as possible so that you allow your body to regenerate itself in the way it is meant to each evening.

What to Do If You Wake in the Night

If you are a light sleeper and tend to wake up a lot in the night, or if you are experiencing insomnia, there are ways to mitigate the experience so that you can feel better and get more restful sleep. If you do wake in the night, try the following to help you get back to sleep so that it doesn't become an issue.

Don't Look at your Phone or Electronics

If you've closed your eyes, repositioned, and tried another 20 minutes to fall asleep and you can't, remember to avoid looking at your phone or electronics anyway. Even though you're awake, it's best to avoid that so that your mind doesn't get used to being entertained in the middle of the night.

Get Up Out of the Bed

If you have tried for more than 20 minutes to fall back to sleep but you are wide awake, go ahead and get up. However, don't get up to be super-physical or do anything that will stimulate your mind. Instead, get up and go curl up in a comfortable chair with dim lighting and a book of poetry or something that makes you feel calm. If it's within an hour or two of your standard wake time, stay up and start your day.

Don't Look at the Clock

Avoid looking at the clock while you're lying in bed and experiencing insomnia. Just turn it around if you need to so that you can avoid checking it over and over, which can add to your anxiety and make it impossible to fall back to sleep.

Try Deep Breathing Exercises

If you need to get up, you can try some breathing exercises to help you relax and get back to sleep. You can do this in bed before getting up to find out if it'll help you get right

back to sleep or not, or you can get up and do this too. Try triangular breathing. The way it works is that you breathe in through your nose for a count of four, holding the air in your lungs for a count of four, then blowing out of your mouth for a count of four. Do this until you get tired or fall asleep.

Write in Your Journal

If you are waking due to stress and you've tried to use deep breathing to get back to sleep, and it's not working, get out your journal and write three things you're grateful for so that you can turn your thoughts around to thinking of good things instead of stressful situations.

If you are regularly waking no matter what you do, you may need to figure out a better bedtime routine. Double check that you're not eating anything, drinking anything, or thinking about anything that is anti-sleep inducing. If, after a couple of days, you're not getting better, here are some tips on dealing with insomnia.

Dealing with Insomnia

If your night-time wakefulness has now turned into insomnia – whether temporary, intermittent, or chronic, you may want to find a way to deal with it using any of these methods.

In most cases, if nothing major is wrong with your health, you should be able to clear up insomnia within a few days of paying attention to your sleep routines and patterns.

If it lasts longer, you may need to seek medical attention because insomnia is one symptom of several types of illnesses such as allergies, GERD, or chronic pain. Even endocrine issues like undiagnosed hyperthyroidism can cause insomnia.

Find a Good Sleep Position

If you've slept the same way your entire life and are now having issues getting to sleep, there could be a reason. If you have arthritis (which can happen with aging) or other health issues, you may find that your old sleep position isn't working for you any longer. Experiment with different ways to sleep, ensuring proper spine alignment to avoid body pain.

Get More Sunlight during the Day

Anytime you are having issues falling asleep at night, the first thing to look at is how much sunlight you are getting each day. The more sunlight you can get during the day before about 2 pm, the better for your internal clock. However, getting too much sunlight before bed can have the opposite effect and keep you up at the wrong hours.

Exercise Regularly

Even though you work hard, if your job is mental in nature, you still need a good workout every single day. The thing is, it doesn't have to be as hard as you may initially think, and it should not be at night. Try doing your workout as early in the day as you can so that you can be sleepy at night. Work out for at least 30 to 40 minutes at moderate intensity.

Avoid Blue Light Exposure at Night

If you are looking at computers, smartphones, and other electronic screens, you may be exposing yourself to too much blue light. The blue light can mess up your rhythm and cause you to suffer from insomnia. You can buy glasses that filter the light, or you can install an app to help. The best thing to do is to avoid it at night.

Stop Using Caffeine after 2 PM

This tip is worth repeating. If you like to use caffeine, try to avoid it after 2 pm, especially when you are having issues falling and staying asleep at night. If you limit it and you're still having problems after a few days, try eliminating it altogether to get the best results.

Avoid Taking Naps

When you are trying to stop insomnia, you'll need to stop taking any naps until you can fall asleep within about 20 minutes without issues every night. You can get into a lousy wake-and-nap cycle that is not therapeutic at all and instead cuts down on your productivity and ruins your schedules.

Go to Bed and Get Up at the Same Time

Try to go to bed at the same time each evening and get up at the same time every morning. You can adjust this to fit your lifestyle by an hour or so, but you really will do better if you go to bed and get up at consistent times almost all the time.

Try a Supplement

If making your room colder isn't helping, try taking melatonin supplements to help the process improve. Find a high-quality melatonin supplement that has been third party tested, and take it according to package directions.

Seek Medical Attention

If you have tried all these tips and you're still experiencing insomnia, you may want to seek medical attention. You could have a significant health problem that you aren't dealing with properly. Conditions like sleep apnea, asthma, GERD, and others can contribute to and even cause insomnia.

In addition to regular blood tests and a physical exam, your doctor may want to order a sleep study to find out if you have other health issues affecting your sleep. If that happens, you'll go to a sleep center and get hooked up to a bunch of wires; then you'll need to sleep while they monitor you.

This is relatively painless but it is not easy; some people cannot sleep at all in these conditions and may require other methods to diagnose the problem. Your healthcare professional can help you with this.

Conclusion

Getting a better night's sleep means that you will need to devote the same consideration to sleep as you do other types of productivity in your life. Sleeping soundly and getting rest is as essential to your good health as eating right is.

When you sleep at least seven to nine hours each night, you'll improve your health mentally and physically. Your body will be able to fight off illness better, and you'll be far more productive each day at your job and at life in general because you won't be fighting sleep.

When you sleep enough, not only will your mental clarity be top-notch, but you'll also experience less illness overall because sleep is when your body repairs and regenerates. We all need to be at our best at everything we do, from work to spending time with family and friends. Getting a good night's sleep will make it all so much better.