



Healthy Rest, Healthy Weight

TIPS FOR IMPROVING SLEEP

A good night's rest is fundamental to good health. It also plays an important role in maintaining a healthy weight.

How lack of sleep affects body weight

- **Increased hunger:** Too little sleep may alter hormones that control hunger leading to increased hunger and appetite.
- **More opportunity to eat:** Less sleep means more hours awake and more time to snack.
- **Change in schedule:** Can lead to irregular meal times, increased snacking, relying on foods and drinks to stay awake.
- **Decreased physical activity:** Poor sleep can lead to tiredness and may curb physical activity.
- **Lower body temperature:** Sleep deprived people tend to have lower body temperatures which may lead to the body using less calories.

Other health considerations with sleep deprivation:

- Increased risk of heart disease
- Increased risk of diabetes
- Memory Loss
- Depression

How much sleep is needed?

Most people need 7 to 9 hours of sleep per 24-hour period, although this amount can vary with individuals.

One method to assess your sleep needs is to take a sleep vacation. During a time that allows a flexible schedule, maybe during a vacation, pick a consistent bedtime and do not use an alarm clock to wake up. It's possible that you will sleep longer the first few days as you will likely catch up on sleep. As you continue to go to bed at the same time and wake up naturally, you will start to notice a sleep pattern. This should help identify how much sleep is needed.

Ways to improve sleep:

Create a routine: Establish a regular bedtime and wake up schedule, even on the days you do not go to work or have somewhere to be.

Limit stimulants later in the day: This includes caffeine which may last for up to 16 hours in one's system. Up to 400 mg of caffeine per day is considered safe for most healthy adults.

Sources of caffeine include:

- Coffee - 100 mg per 8 oz cup
- Tea - 14 mg to 60 mg per 8 oz cup
- Chocolate - 45 mg in 1.5 oz. bar
- Most sodas (unless labeled caffeine-free) - 45 mg in 12 oz. drink

Consider stopping caffeine intake 6 hours before bed to prevent it from affecting sleep. Alcohol before bed may make you feel drowsy but may contribute to poor quality sleep.

Manage Stress: Plan a relaxing evening and avoid stress, especially within the hour before bedtime. Relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, and deep breathing may help.

Physical Activity: Regular activity may help with improved sleep but should be done at least 3 hours before bedtime. Activity too close to bedtime can act as a stimulant and prevent adequate sleep.

Create a pleasant environment:

- Cool temperatures (65°-72°)
- Quiet: use a noise machine or fan to drown background noise.
- Comfortable bedding and mattress
- Avoid excessive lighting (illuminated clocks)
- Turn off electronics 30 minutes before bed.



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Healthy eating to improve sleep:

- **Regular meal times and snacks:** Space meals every 4-5 hours and add snacks as needed. Eating too little during the day may lead to overeating at dinner which can interfere with sleep. Eating too little with dinner may also keep you awake due to hunger pangs.
- **Limit spicy, high fat, or gas producing foods:** These foods can trigger indigestion and disrupt your bedtime.
- **Eat high fiber carbohydrates before bedtime:** Carbohydrate foods raise serotonin levels in the brain which may help enhance sleep. Choose whole grains cereals, breads, pasta, and brown rice. Limit refined carbohydrates and those that contain added sugars and fats.
- **Focus on lean proteins:** Lean proteins contain tryptophan which helps production serotonin and melatonin levels. These include chicken, turkey, and fish such as salmon, tuna, halibut, and shrimp, also beans and legumes.
- **Choose heart healthy fats:** Unsaturated fats and omega 3 fatty acids can also produce melatonin to help us sleep. Choose olive oil, canola oil, avocados, nuts, and fatty fish.
- **Include calcium rich foods:** Ever drink a glass of warm milk before bed? Dairy is a rich source of calcium which helps with production of melatonin to aid in better sleep cycles. Other sources of calcium include dark leafy greens, beans, soy, and fortified foods.
- **Make room for magnesium:** Magnesium is a mineral that relaxes nerves and muscles and helps with circulation. Some sleep disorders have been linked to low magnesium levels. Food sources to add to your meal plan are: whole grains, dark greens, nuts and seeds, low-fat dairy, chocolate, and fruits such as bananas, berries and avocado.
- **B-Complex:** Several B vitamins including B6, B12 have been linked to supporting levels of melatonin and serotonin.
- **Tart cherries:** dried, fresh and juiced, tart cherries contain a natural form of melatonin. One study showed that drinking cherry juice in the morning and evening for 2 weeks reduced insomnia in some individuals.
- **Herbs and supplements:** At this time melatonin and valerian are sold over the counter. There is insufficient information verifying if these medication or other herbal supplements are effective at treating sleeping disorders. Please consult your doctor before starting any supplements.