

# Tips to Getting a Good Night's Sleep

1. **Stick to a sleep schedule.** Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day, even on the weekends.
2. **Exercise is great but not too late in the day.** Try to exercise at least 30 minutes on most days but not later than 2-3 hours before your bedtime.
3. **Avoid caffeine and nicotine.** Coffee, colas, certain teas, and chocolate contain the stimulant caffeine, and its effects can take as long as 8 hours to wear off fully. Therefore, a cup of coffee in the late afternoon can make it hard for you to fall asleep at night. Nicotine is also a stimulant.
4. **Avoid alcoholic drinks before bed.** You may think having an alcoholic “nightcap” will help you sleep, but alcohol keeps you in the lighter stages of sleep. You also tend to wake up in the middle of the night when the effects of the alcohol have worn off.
5. **Avoid large meals and beverages late at night.** A light snack is okay, but large meals can cause indigestion that interferes with sleep. Drinking Too many fluids at night can cause frequent awakenings to urinate.
6. **Avoid medicines that delay or disrupt your sleep, if possible.** Some commonly prescribed heart, blood pressure, or asthma medications can disrupt sleep patterns. Some over the counter and herbal remedies for coughs, colds, or allergies, can also disrupt sleep patterns. If you have trouble sleeping, talk to your doctor or pharmacist to see if any drugs you are taking might be part of your insomnia.
7. **Do not take naps after 3 p.m.** Naps can help make up for lost sleep, but late afternoon naps can make it harder to fall asleep at night. Also, keep naps to under an hour.
8. **Relax before bed.** Do not overschedule your day so that no time is left for unwinding. A relaxing activity, such as reading or listening to music, should be part of your bedtime ritual.
9. **Take a hot bath before bed.** The drop in body temperature after getting out of the bath may help you feel sleepy, and the bath can help you relax.
10. **Have a good sleeping environment.** Get rid of anything that might distract you from sleep, such as noises, bright lights, an uncomfortable bed, or a TV or computer in the bedroom. You sleep better if the temperature in your bedroom is kept on the cool side.
11. **Have the right sunlight exposure.** Daylight is key to regulating daily sleep patterns. Try to get outside in natural sunlight for at least 30 minutes each day.
12. **Do not lie in bed awake.** If you find yourself still awake after staying in bed for more than 20 minutes, get up and do some relaxing activity until you feel sleepy. The anxiety of not being able to sleep can make it harder to fall asleep.
13. **See a doctor if you continue to have trouble sleeping.** If you consistently find yourself feeling tired or not well rested during the day despite spending enough time in bed at night, you may have a sleep disorder. Your family doctor or a sleep specialist should be able to help you.

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

