



# Healthy Sleep Habits

**SLEEP ONLY WHEN SLEEPY.** If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up and do something quiet until you feel sleepy. For example, if you don't fall asleep until 12:30 am, don't go to bed until about 12:10. Keep moving the time that you go to bed back progressively, about 15-20 minutes every 3 days, until you reach a reasonable bedtime.

**REGULARITY IS ESSENTIAL.** Wake up and go to bed at the same time every day. It doesn't matter if it is a holiday or weekend. Be consistent.

**TAKE A HOT BATH.** Establish a routine before bedtime. Taking a warm bath about 90 minutes before bed may help you relax and wind down after a long day. Body temperature peaks in the daytime and falls during sleep. We tend to become sleepy as our body temperature begins to fall.

**ESTABLISH A REGULAR RELAXING BETIME ROUTINE.** Try to avoid emotionally upsetting conversations and activities before trying to go to sleep. Don't dwell on, or bring your problems to bed. You may benefit from practicing some stress-reducing techniques, such as guided imagery or deep-breathing exercises.

**ASSOCIATE YOUR BED WITH SLEEP.** The bedroom is for intimacy and sleep ONLY. It's not a good idea to use your bed to watch TV, listen to the radio or read.

## REDUCE FACTORS WHICH MIGH AROUSE YOU FROM SLEEP.

- Your bed should be comfortable.
- Sleep in a cooler room with enough blankets to keep warm. *If you suffer from hot flashes, use wicking sheets, a cooling pillow or special bed fan to keep you cool. Talk to your provider about other options if necessary.*
- Use a blackout shade if early morning sunlight bothers you.
- Avoid nightlights.
- Wear earplugs or consider a "white noise" machine or fan to reduce outside sound disturbances that may awaken you.

**MELATONIN.** 1 to 4 mg of melatonin about 30 minutes before bedtime may help. Melatonin begins to rise as the sun sets, about 1½ hours before bedtime, making you feel sleepy. **Blue light (from cell phones, TV, computer screens, video games, etc.) suppresses the production of Melatonin...and can sabotage a good night's sleep!**

**TRYPTOPHAN.** Warm milk contains tryptophan, the same amino acid found in turkey, that with other chemical messengers tend to make you feel sleepy. Tryptophan with a small carbohydrate snack may improve your ability to relax and fall asleep.

**AVOID LARGE MEALS.** Large meals before bed should be avoided.

**AVOID NAPS.** Napping during the day can disturb the normal pattern of sleep and wakefulness.

**EXERCISE.** Vigorous exercise should be done in the morning or late afternoon. A relaxing exercise, like yoga, can be done before to help initiate a restful night's sleep.

**AVOID STIMULANTS.** Caffeine, nicotine, alcohol and some medications within three hours of bedtime can wire you and make it difficult to fall asleep. While alcohol is well known to speed the onset of sleep, it disrupts sleep as the body begins to metabolize it, causing arousal. *Remember... chocolate contains caffeine.*

**USE SUNLIGHT TO SET YOUR BIOLOGICAL CLOCK.** This is particularly important for older people who may not venture outside as frequently as children and adults. Plenty of morning sunlight exposure helps maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle.

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