

Build Better Sleep Habits

Try these tips to prepare your mind, body, and bedroom for a good night's sleep.

- 1 Stick to a schedule.**

Go to bed around the same time every night and set your alarm for the same time every morning — even on the weekends. A consistent sleep schedule trains your brain to naturally feel tired at bedtime so you fall asleep faster, and makes it easier to wake up feeling refreshed.
- 2 Limit food and drink before bed.**

Eating a big meal before bedtime can cause restless sleep. Likewise, drinking too many fluids may lead to multiple bathroom trips that disrupt your sleep. You should also avoid alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine a few hours before bed — these substances are linked to more awake time during the night.
- 3 Dim the lights.**

Make a habit of dimming household lights in the lead-up to bedtime. If your bedroom lets in light, try using blackout curtains or an eye mask. A too-bright bedroom sends your body the wrong signals, triggering the release of hormones that promote alertness instead of sleepiness.
- 4 Create a bedtime routine.**

Doing the same things in the same order at the same time every night helps your mind and body relax before bed. Beyond the basics like brushing your teeth, your routine should include a calming, screen-free activity such as reading, stretching, taking a bath, or listening to music.
- 5 Go screen-free.**

TVs, computers, and smartphones emit blue light that trick your brain into believing it's daytime, so it's harder to drift off. Put your devices down at the beginning of your bedtime routine. If you can, avoid using electronics in the evening as much as possible.
- 6 Exercise earlier.**

Regular exercise is known to lower stress and improve sleep quality — but when done at night, it can have the opposite effect. If you exercise in the evening, make sure your workout is moderate (not vigorous) intensity and ends at least one hour before bedtime.
- 7 Keep it quiet.**

Noises can keep you awake or interrupt your sleep. Some people find that music or certain sounds, like white noise, help them fall asleep faster. Don't hesitate to silence your phone overnight — many smartphones now have settings that allow you to receive emergency calls when the phone is on silent.
- 8 Address your stress.**

If stress or worries are keeping you up at night, try incorporating stress management techniques into your day and seek help from a professional therapist for more serious symptoms. Meditating or deep breathing right before bed can also be an effective way to slow your heart rate and racing thoughts.
- 9 Talk to your doctor.**

If you have ongoing sleep problems or concerns about insomnia that are affecting your daily life, it's time to seek help. Your doctor may be able to identify and treat an underlying condition, change your prescription medication if it's interfering with your sleep, or refer you to a specialist.