

SLEEP – The Bottom Line

Sleep plays a key role in [your health](#). A good night's sleep is just as important as regular exercise and a healthy diet. If you are interested in optimal health and wellbeing, then you should make [sleep](#) a top priority and *incorporate some of the tips below*.

Increase Bright Light Exposure During The Day

Your body has a natural time-keeping clock known as your circadian rhythm which affects your brain, body and [hormones](#), helping you stay awake and telling your body when it's time to sleep. Natural sunlight or bright light during the day affects your circadian rhythm and improves daytime [energy](#), as well as nighttime sleep quality and duration. **Daily sunlight or artificial bright light can improve sleep quality and duration, especially if you have severe sleep issues or insomnia.**

Reduce Blue Light Exposure in the Evening

Exposure to light during the day is beneficial, but nighttime light exposure has the opposite effect. Blue light — which electronic devices like smartphones and computers emit in large amounts — is the worst in this regard. You can use to reduce nighttime [blue light exposure](#) by:

- Wear glasses that block blue light.
- Download an app such as [f.lux](#) to block blue light on your laptop or computer.
- Install an app that blocks blue light on your smartphone.
- Stop watching TV and turn off bright lights two hours before bed.

Blue light tricks your body into thinking it's daytime. Take steps to reduce blue light exposure in the evening.

Don't Consume Caffeine Late in the Day

Caffeine has [numerous benefits](#) and is consumed by 90% of the US population. However, when consumed late in the day, coffee stimulates your nervous system and may stop your body from naturally relaxing at night, so drinking large amounts of coffee after 3–4 p.m. is not recommended — especially if you are sensitive to caffeine or have trouble sleeping. **Caffeine can significantly worsen sleep quality, especially if you drink large amounts in the late afternoon or evening.**

Reduce Irregular or Long Daytime Naps

While short power naps are beneficial, long or irregular napping during the day can negatively affect your sleep. Sleeping in the daytime can confuse your internal clock, meaning that you may struggle to sleep at night. If you take regular daytime naps and sleep well, you shouldn't have to worry. The effects of napping depend on the individual. **Long daytime naps may impair sleep quality. If you have trouble sleeping at night, stop napping or shorten your naps.**

Try to Sleep and Wake at Consistent Times

Your body's circadian rhythm functions on a set loop, aligning itself with sunrise and sunset. Being consistent with your sleep and waking times can aid long-term sleep quality. If you struggle with sleep, try to get in the habit of waking up and going to bed at similar times. After several weeks, you may not even need an alarm. **Try to get into a regular sleep/wake cycle — especially on the weekends. If possible, try to wake up naturally at a similar time every day.**

Take a Melatonin Supplement

Melatonin is a key sleep hormone that tells your brain when it's time to relax and head to bed. [Melatonin supplements](#) are an extremely popular sleep aid. Additionally, no withdrawal effects were reported in the main melatonin studies. **A melatonin supplement may improve sleep quality and help you fall asleep faster. Speak with your doctor about whether you should take 1–5 mg around 30–60 minutes before heading to bed.**

Don't Drink Alcohol

Downing a couple of drinks at night can negatively affect your sleep and hormones. [Alcohol](#) is known to cause or increase the symptoms of sleep apnea, snoring and disrupted sleep patterns. It also alters nighttime melatonin production, which plays a key role in your body's circadian rhythm. **Avoid alcohol before bed, as it can reduce nighttime melatonin production and lead to disrupted sleep patterns.**

Optimize Your Bedroom Environment

Many people believe that the bedroom environment and its setup are key factors in getting a good night's sleep. These factors include temperature, noise, external lights and furniture arrangement. **Optimize your bedroom environment by eliminating external light and noise to get better sleep. Test different temperatures to find out which is most comfortable for you. Around 70°F (20°C) is best for most people.**

Relax and Clear Your Mind in the Evening

Many people have a pre-sleep routine that helps them relax. Relaxation techniques before bed have been shown to improve sleep quality and are another common technique used to treat insomnia. Strategies include listening to relaxing music, reading a book, taking a hot bath, [meditating](#), deep breathing and visualization. **Relaxation techniques before bed, including hot baths or showers and/or meditation, may help you fall asleep.**

Rule Out a Sleep Disorder

An underlying health condition may be the cause of your sleep problems. If you've always struggled with sleep, it may be wise to consult with your doctor. **There are many common conditions that can cause poor sleep, including sleep apnea. See a doctor if poor sleep is a consistent problem in your life.**

Exercise Regularly — But Not Before Bed

Exercise is one of the best science-backed ways to improve your sleep and health. It can enhance all aspects of sleep and has been used to reduce symptoms of insomnia. Although daily exercise is key for a good night's sleep, performing it too late in the day may cause sleep problems, but it depends on the individual. **Regular exercise during daylight hours is one of the best ways to ensure a good night's sleep.**

Don't Drink Any Liquids Before Bed

Nocturia is the medical term for excessive urination during the night. It affects sleep quality and daytime energy. Although hydration is [vital for your health](#), it is wise to reduce your fluid intake in the late evening. **Reduce fluid intake in the late evening and try to use the bathroom right before bed.**