

10 Tips Commandments to Help You Get a Better Night's Sleep

1. **Keep a regular sleep schedule**, waking at about the same time every morning and avoiding “sleeping in” on weekends. It may be tempting to sleep later the morning after a bad night, but doing so will only reduce your sleep need for the next night, thus continuing the poor sleep cycle.
2. **Develop a relaxing bedtime routine** to help your mind and body wind down from the day. Soak in a hot bath an hour before bedtime (lowers body temperature and increases melatonin production), listen to soothing music, read for pleasure, resolve lingering worries. Avoid bright light and blue light (screens) for 1-2 hours before bedtime.
3. **Use the bed only for sleeping or sex.** Using it for any other activity weakens the association of bed with sleep. So no computer, television, texting, talking on the phone, eating, reading or working.
4. **Limit your bed partners.** Human and/or pet partners may offer a sense of comfort, but their presence may also contribute to disturbed sleep. Decide what arrangement is best for you. Consider using earplugs if you find you are routinely awakened by noises in our outside of your home.
5. **Get a 30-60 minute dose of morning light** in order to reset your circadian system and maintain your natural sleep/wake cycle. Walk the dog, exercise, do an outside chore or eat your breakfast by a window. If you have trouble accessing natural morning light, consider investing in a light therapy box (5,000-10,000 lumens).
6. **Exercise regularly.** Regular exercise is essential for physical and emotional wellness, as well as sound sleep. Morning exercise is ideal, but anytime is fine so long as it does not interfere with your bedtime relaxation process (end exercise no later than 2-3 hours before desired bedtime).
7. **Avoid eating too much too close to bedtime**, as doing so can interfere with falling or staying asleep. Especially avoid stimulants such as nicotine, sugar, caffeine and heavily processed foods. Tryptophan rich (meat, fish, leafy vegetables, soybeans, oat bran, nuts and seeds) or complex carbohydrate (whole grains, fruits) snacks are okay.
8. **Avoid caffeine and alcohol, especially before bedtime.** The half-life of caffeine is 3-6 hours, but some people are more sensitive to its effects than others. Moreover, our sensitivity to caffeine can change over time. Recent studies indicate that caffeine consumed one morning can affect some people's sleep for up to 48 hours after. Drinking alcohol close to bedtime lowers melatonin production, increases adrenaline and disrupts sleep throughout the night, and so is not recommended within 6 hours of bedtime.
9. **Limit your napping** until you've improved your sleep. When you are satisfied with your sleep schedule, a 20-minute nap about halfway through the day can refresh without causing grogginess or interfering with the next night's sleep.
10. **Don't watch the clock.** Estimate the amount of time passing without sleeping rather than continually checking the clock. Set the alarm if you're worried about not waking on time.