

Tips for a better sleep

Sleep troubles come in many varieties. Do you have trouble falling asleep? Do you go to sleep easily but wake up repeatedly throughout the night? Do you find it hard to drag yourself out of bed in the morning? All of these problems can lead to decreased brain function and a weaker body.

If you are one of the 70 million Americans who have trouble sleeping, try some of these tips for getting a better night's sleep. Remember that we are all unique individuals and what works for one person may not work for another. Keep trying new techniques until you find something that works.

1. **Instead of sleeping in a warm room...**

DO THIS: make sure that the temperature is comfortable and on the cooler side. Research shows that when you go to sleep, your internal thermostat drops. This body temperature change actually induces sleep. Additionally, the comfort level of your bedroom temperature can also dramatically affect the quality your sleep when you do sleep.

2. **Instead of having night lights or a digital clock...**

DO THIS: ensure that your room is as dark as possible. A key factor in regulating sleep patterns is exposure to light or to darkness so falling asleep with any light on is not the best thing for a good night's sleep.

3. **Instead of falling asleep to your favorite TV show or surfing the web to unwind...**

DO THIS: Take computers, video games, the TV and cell phones out of your bedroom and turn them off an at least 30 minutes before bedtime since studies demonstrate they emit a type of light that stimulates the brain.

4. **Instead of drinking a glass of wine, using marijuana or eating chocolate before bed to help you sleep...**

DO THIS: drink a mixture of warm unsweetened almond milk, a teaspoon of vanilla (the real stuff, not imitation), and a few drops of stevia. This may increase serotonin in your brain and help you sleep.

5. Instead of taking a nap to make up for a difficult night sleeping...

DO THIS: power through until bedtime and get on a regular sleep schedule. Taking naps when you feel sleepy during the day compounds the nighttime sleep cycle disruption. Then work on maintaining a regular sleep schedule – going to bed at the same time each night and waking up at the same time each day, including on weekends.

6. Instead of going to bed worried or angry...

DO THIS: try to fix emotional problems before going to sleep with a positive text, email, or intention to deal with the issue tomorrow. If you forgive the other person first, you may just end the argument.

7. Instead of tossing and turning while watching the clock when you can't sleep...

DO THIS: move the clock so you can't see it. If you wake up in the middle of the night, refrain from looking at the clock. Checking the time can make you feel anxious, which will only make it harder to go back to sleep. And if you are unable to fall asleep or return to sleep easily, get up and go to another room to do something relaxing until you feel more tired.

8. Instead of being awakened by every noise you hear...

DO THIS: try sound therapy which can induce a very peaceful mood and lull you to sleep. Consider soothing nature sounds, wind chimes, a fan, or soft music. Studies have shown that slower classical music, or any music that has a slow rhythm of 60 to 80 beats per minute, can help with sleep. If you share the room with someone who snores, try wearing ear plugs.

9. Instead of going for a late night run or taking an evening exercise class...

DO THIS: make sure to finish exercising at least four hours before you want to go to sleep. Although regular exercise is VERY beneficial for insomnia, doing vigorous exercise late in the evening may energize you and keep you awake.