

10 Top Tips For Tip-Top Sleep

(or at least a better sleep number)

One of the best remedies for stress is a good night's sleep. Unfortunately, one of the most common side effects of any stress disorder is the inability to get a good night's sleep.

The following suggestions are collectively known as sleep hygiene. They are the first line of treatment for a restful night.

Keep a regular schedule.

Wake up and go to bed at the same time every day, including weekends.

Create a restful environment.

Keep the bedroom temperature comfortable and make certain the room is dark enough.

Use your bed only for sleep and sexual activity.

If you have a TV in your bedroom, watch it from a chair.

Set up a "wind-down" period before bedtime to help clear your mind.

Stop any activity that energizes you 30 to 60 minutes before bed. This includes watching TV, using a computer or playing video games. Instead, try a hot shower or warm bath, reading, listening to mood music, meditation or deep-breathing exercises.

Avoid caffeine (a stimulant) six hours before bedtime.

This includes sports drinks, energy drinks, coffee, tea, soda, diet supplements and pain relievers that contain caffeine.

Don't use alcohol, non-prescribed drugs or nicotine.

Alcohol may initially help you get to sleep, but it prevents the healthy, restful stages of sleep we need. Over-the-counter sleep aids lead to grogginess. Smoking can cause light sleep, with early-morning wakeups due to nicotine withdrawal.

Exercise regularly and stay active during the day.

But do not exercise three hours or less before bedtime.

Don't go to bed on a full stomach or hungry.

If you're hungry near bedtime, try a light snack of cheese, turkey or crackers with a glass of milk.

Stop watching the clock.

It will just make you more anxious.

Get up if you can't sleep.

After 30 minutes of tossing and turning, get up and go to another room. Try reading to make you drowsy or deep-breathing exercises; concentrate on relaxing your shoulder muscles.

If after one week you still have serious sleeping problems, see your doctor or treatment provider. There may be physical reasons why you are unable to sleep, and these should be discussed with a professional.