

Healthy Sleep Habits

The following recommendations are given to provide the best quality sleep every night.

1. **Have a consistent sleep schedule.** Wake up and go to bed at about the same time on weeknights and weekend nights. Bedtime and wake time should not differ from day to day by more than an hour.
2. **Establish a regular, relaxing bedtime routine.** Make the 30 minutes before bed wind-down time. Do not watch TV, use electronic devices (smartphones, tablets, etc.), the Internet, or exercise during this time; rather, do something relaxing, such as playing with quiet toys, reading a book, or listening to soothing music.
3. **Create an environment that is only for sleeping.** This means the bedroom should be comfortable, quiet, and dark. Also, make sure the room is not too warm (75 degrees or higher), as warm temperatures interfere with sleep. It is also very important to get all technology (TV, cell phones, computers, tablets, etc.) out of the bedroom.
4. **Have a light snack before bed.** Eat regular meals throughout the day and have a light snack before bed. There is truth to cookies and milk helping facilitate sleep! Healthier snack choices include yogurt, milk, or cheese. Do not eat large amounts of sugar or chocolate.
5. **Exercise regularly (but not too close to bedtime).** The best time to exercise is first thing in the morning or in the late afternoon. Avoid strenuous physical exertion right before bed.
6. **Enjoy the sunshine in the morning.** Spend time outside every day, especially in the morning, as exposure to sunlight or bright light helps to keep the body's internal clock on track. However, it is important to limit light exposure in the evening, especially after dinner. This means turning down overhead lights and reducing the brightness of screens (e.g., computers, tablets).
7. **Avoid naps if you are having trouble falling asleep at bedtime.** Naps are developmentally appropriate in young children, and some adolescents benefit from a short afternoon nap (45 minutes right after school). However, for those who have difficulties falling asleep at bedtime, naps can make this even worse.
8. **Do not consume caffeine after 4 p.m. or within 6 hours of bedtime.** Caffeine has a half-life of 4 to 6 hours, which means it should still be helping you stay awake 4 to 6 hours after you take it but then can also make it hard to fall asleep! Be aware of all the things that have caffeine. You may know that many sodas, coffee, iced tea, and dark chocolate have caffeine. But you can also find caffeine in less obvious products like certain waters, juice drinks, gum, and candy bars. Some medications also contain caffeine. In general, children should not be consuming caffeine.

Just like the dentist asks you to brush and floss twice a day or your doctor asks you to eat five fruits and vegetables and exercise 30 minutes every day, healthy sleep habits will help you fall asleep faster, stay asleep, and wake more refreshed in the morning. However, consistency in following these rules is essential to achieve quality sleep.
