

SLEEP DOCTOR

Building better sleep habits

Say hello to better sleep

You're reading this guide because you're ready to take steps toward getting better sleep. We recommend identifying the areas you need to work on the most and starting there. Be patient with yourself as you work on improving your sleep habits and don't try to take on too much at a time. Remember, consistency is key and any progress is a step in the right direction.

We've filled this guide with a number of different topics related to sleep to give you all the information you need to improve your sleep. Each section ends with a quick recap of the information we've covered. These recaps are focused on the main points of the section and provide recommendations and actions you can take to try to improve your sleep.

We've also included a daily checklist with actions you can take every day and night to set yourself up for better sleep. Think of it as a jumping-off point to help you start making changes to your daily routine to improve your sleep. Not every item on the checklist may work for you, and that's alright. See what you can do and feel free to use the checklist to help you get oriented each day.

If you haven't already, we encourage you to discover your **current sleep score** through our test. You can use your score as a baseline as you start thinking about your sleep needs and what you need to improve. As you use this guide, you can track how your score changes over time to see your hard work pay off.

Medical disclaimer: The following content should not be used as medical advice or as a recommendation for any specific treatment. Before making any lifestyle changes, consult your health care professional.

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Harnessing Your Lion Chronotype

Lions are your classic morning people. They prefer to go to bed early, wake up early, and they're typically most productive before 12 p.m. Lions will typically wake up before the sun rises, around 5 a.m., and they naturally turn in for the night before 10 p.m. The working world is set up in favor of lions, who can show up to a typical workday bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. Around 15% of people are lions.

If you…

- Naturally wake up at or before sunrise
- Hop out of bed with plenty of energy
- Crash when the sun goes down, sleeping before 10 p.m.

…you're probably a **lion**.

Strengths

Each chronotype has its own unique strengths built into their natural cycles. Lions are often able to focus their early morning energy to achieve great things while others are still waking up.

Wake Up Ready to Roll

Lions often wake up early, with plenty of energy to get the day started. Many lions feel like they should take this energy and go full steam ahead when they wake up, going for morning workouts and leaving for work early.

While others are just getting started with their days, lions have been up awake and working for hours. Some lions are able to help others get moving, rallying everyone for the day ahead with their energy and enthusiasm.

Productive

In many ways, the working world is set up nicely for lions. They're able to get to work earlier than most, knock out tasks while their coworkers are starting their days, and tap out in the late afternoon.

Lions often make great strategists and doers, making detailed plans in the wee hours of the morning and then immediately executing them. Their combination of abundant energy and fewer distractions in the early morning makes many lions great at tackling project after project.

Pain Points

Each chronotype has its own unique struggles built into their natural cycles. Lions usually run into issues around being "ahead" of everyone else in the day.

Running Out of Steam

Lions start the day with plenty of energy, but it can be difficult to maintain it. After lions hit their peak for the day, their energy reserves dwindle in the afternoon, and many lions feel like they're running out of energy by the time it's dark out.

While lions typically don't struggle with setting up a regular sleep schedule, that's usually because their bodies push them to go to bed early. Some lions are left frustrated because they feel limited in what they can do after a certain hour, or like their bodies are forcing them to get too much sleep.

Missing Out on Life

Their day's pace is ahead of most of the world, so lions often find themselves at odds with the schedules of other chronotypes. Lions may miss out on opportunities to connect with coworkers by taking lunch early or declining happy hour and dinner invites from family and friends.

Their abundant morning energy can be overwhelming to others under the wrong circumstances. Lions can find themselves losing energy when everyone else is socializing, or missing out on nighttime events because they need to sleep.

How to Adjust Your Schedule to Match Your Chronotype



Most people have an idea of what their chronotype is, based on when they like to wake up and go to bed. That being said, few of us actively work with and harness our chronotype to its fullest potential. Sometimes our lives and society aren't a match for our chronotypes, sometimes we don't know our chronotypes well enough to know what times we should focus on different tasks.

When we do things can be just as important as how we do them. When we plan our days around our body's natural cycles, we're able to better synchronize our bodies with our actions. We've got energy when we need it, we're in the right headspace to tackle the right problems, and we're better equipped to rest when it's time for bed.



It takes time to make large-scale changes to your routine, so we recommend focusing on different changes each week to optimize your schedule over time and improve your sleep. Here are the changes you should focus on over the next few weeks to have the biggest impact on your sleep quality, and start living in line with your chronotype:

Week 1

- Eat breakfast within thirty minutes of waking up
- Exercise in the early evening, not the early morning

Week 2

- Continue with previous week's changes
- Try making connections in the morning at home or at breakfast meetings (you'll have a snack) instead of pushing all interactions into the evening hours
- Shift lunch to 12:00 p.m.

Week 3

- Continue with previous weeks' changes
- Shift dinner to 6:00 p.m.
- Limit alcohol after 7:30 p.m.

Week 4

- Continue with previous changes
- Schedule important strategic meetings for the morning
- Schedule brainstorming meetings in the afternoon

A Perfect Day in the Life of a Lion

Your Best Schedule

Here's a full breakdown of what a perfect day in the life of someone with a lion chronotype would look like, if you're planning around your chronotype. We've outlined what you should do at different times of day to best harness your natural cycles as a lion.

5:30 a.m.

What to Do
Wake up, Eat, Hydrate

What to Avoid
Exercise

Why?

Lions start the day with plenty of energy, so many lions feel the need to get moving right away. **Don't.** Save intense exercise for the late afternoon, when you experience a natural dip.

Instead, try eating within 30 minutes of waking up. Go for a high-protein, low carb breakfast to get fueled up for the day ahead. Drink plenty of water to rehydrate after sleeping, around 2 glasses.

6:30 a.m.

What to Do
Plan, Prepare, Meditate

What to Avoid
Racing to get ready

Why?

The rest of the world is waking up while you've had time to eat and settle into your morning rhythm.

This is a great opportunity to think about what's to come and make plans, whether it's for the day, week, month, or even year. Put together your to-do lists, think about your goals, and work on your plans to achieve those goals. Focus yourself and your mental energy for the day to come as you slowly get ready.

7:30 a.m.

What to Do
Coffee and connection

What to Avoid
Rushing to work

Why?

By this point, you've been awake for at least 90 minutes, and you're probably excited to rush off to work and start the day.

Instead, use this time to foster your relationships. Lions often head to work early and wait until the evening to set aside time for the people in their lives. Take some time in the morning to catch up with your family and help them get ready for the day, phone a friend, and respond to personal emails and texts.

If you drink coffee, you can have your first cup around this time. Cut off your coffee intake around 10 a.m. if you can, and give yourself a hard stop on caffeine by 2:00 p.m.

9:00 a.m.

What to Do
Snack, chat, and align

What to Avoid
Grinding away at tasks

Why?

As your coworkers start ramping up for their days, you've been awake for hours. While it may be tempting to dive into work with your lion energy, this is a good opportunity to pause and connect with coworkers.

Have a snack around this time (or schedule a breakfast meeting) to give yourself an excuse to meet with coworkers and keep yourself fueled until lunch. Your natural energy will help your coworkers get energized as well.

10:00 a.m.

What to Do
Tackle the important things

What to Avoid
Getting lunch

Why?

Since lions start their days early and energized, many will get working ASAP and start craving lunch before their coworkers. Having a snack and connecting with coworkers earlier will help you stay focused.

As a lion, this is one of your most productive hours – around this time, you're hitting peak mental clarity. This is the perfect time to throw yourself into important, analytical tasks that require you to be "on." Tackle important meetings, negotiations, problem solving, and focused work.

12:00 p.m.

What to Do
Have a balanced lunch

What to Avoid
Heavy carbs, caffeine

Why?

By snacking earlier, you've managed to wait to have lunch at the same time as your non-lion coworkers.

Go for a meal with a balance of protein, carbs, and healthy fats like a salad with grilled chicken or a fajita bowl with rice. Avoid heavy carbs because they'll make you sleepy.

If you can go outside for lunch, do it. Even just 15 minutes of sunlight exposure will help to naturally regulate your energy.

2:00 p.m.

What to Do
Brainstorming, busy work, creative thinking

What to Avoid
Caffeine, energy drinks, pushing yourself to be "on"

Why?

By this point, you've spent a lot of your focused, problem-solving mental energy. Accept that you're past your peak when it comes to more analytical tasks and shift to a different mindset.

Take this time to let your mind operate creatively. Journaling sessions, reading, and brainstorming are great ways to harness your creative power. Focus on less urgent tasks that don't require as much focused brain power. If you can, this is also a good time to let your mind wander and see what insights you stumble upon.

5:00 p.m.

What to Do
Exercise

What to Avoid
Early dinner

Why?

Your energy levels are dipping. While you may feel hungry, eating dinner now will just make you sleepier and may lead to an energy crash.

Exercising now will raise your heart rate, blood pressure, and cortisol levels and give you the boost you need to keep going until bedtime. If you can exercise outside in the sun, do it. If you shower after, make sure it's a cold one to keep your energy up.

6:00 p.m.

What to Do
Get a balanced dinner, limit drinking

What to Avoid
Heavy carbohydrates, caffeine, too much alcohol

Why?

Like you did with lunch, you'll want to have another balanced meal for dinner. Go for a mix of protein, carbs, and healthy fats, avoiding sleep-inducing heavy carbs.

When it comes to drinking, lions are best at metabolizing alcohol earlier in the day, around 4:00. A drink or two with dinner should be fine, but try to avoid having more. Alcohol and caffeine might help you keep going now, but they'll wreak havoc on your sleep schedule later.

7:30 p.m.

What to Do
Have easy-going fun, wind down, but don't crash

What to Avoid
Drinking, going to bed

Why?

Enjoy these last few hours before bed within reason. Have easy-going fun by socializing with friends and family, watching TV, or digging into a good book.

Avoid drinking or going to bed early – the point of this perfect day is to help you stay awake longer and prime your body for deep rest.

As you get closer to 10:00 p.m., make sure you're home and starting up your pre-bed routine so you're ready to hit the hay.

10:00 p.m.

What to Do
Relax into bed

What to Avoid
Staying up

Why?

By this point, you're pretty tired. Although it may feel like you're pushing yourself to stay awake to this point, you're benefiting your sleep by doing so.

The pull of sleep should be calling at this point, and you'll likely fall asleep quickly and efficiently. Do what you need to do right before bed, and fall asleep.

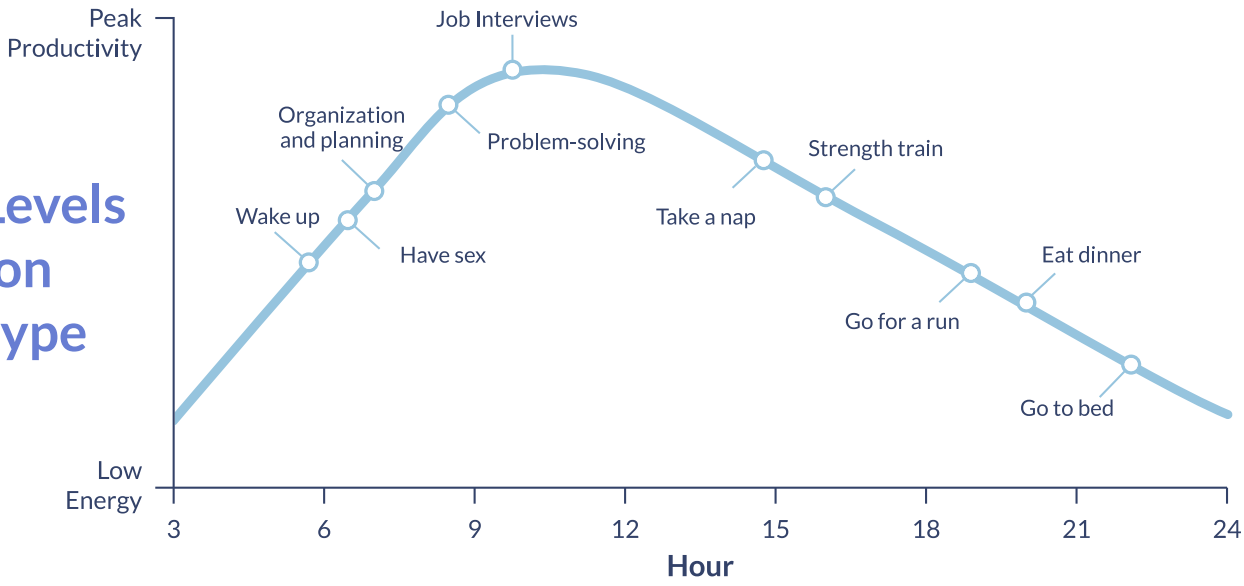
Some of this may seem counterintuitive to what feels natural to you, but adjusting to this schedule will make a world of difference in your daily flow. Don't feel pressured to follow the "perfect day" routine for your chronotype exactly. We'll walk you through how to adjust your schedule in a controlled, realistic way to better harness your chronotype.

Best Times for Different Tasks

If the perfect day schedule for your chronotype doesn't fit you perfectly, that's alright. There's variation between people in every chronotype. We see a wider range of sleep-wake times with bears because they're the majority, but lions, wolves, and dolphins have their own early and late risers.

We've put together some common ranges for when lions should take on different tasks. If these ranges don't work for you at all, it may be worth double-checking your chronotype.

Energy Levels of the Lion Chronotype



Best Sleep-Wake Schedule

Lions wake up bright-eyed and energized, typically never sleeping past 6:45 a.m. Their strong morning energy carries them through the first half of the day.

Although lions start the day with plenty of energy, by 1:30 p.m. your peak alertness window is closed and you may start to become mentally fuzzy.

Wake up at...	5:30 – 6:00 a.m.
You can sleep in until...	6:45 a.m.
Take a nap around...	1:30 p.m.
Go to bed at...	10:00 p.m.

Lions may get tired, though they rarely nap. If you do go for a short rest, try to take a nap around this time.

As soon as the evening light dims, your body may start telling you it's time for bed. You can still socialize and nurture your soul into the evening, if you have the energy for it, but for most lions their internal clock has already begun preparing for their 10 p.m. bedtime.

Lion brain waves are slower and deeper earlier in the night than those of other chronotypes, and some extreme lions may even wake up around 4 a.m., when melatonin levels start to drop. You may not be able to fall back to sleep, and can even struggle with insomnia. Dimming or totally avoiding technology and screens around bedtime can help improve your sleep quality and help you stay asleep throughout the night.

Strategize Your Workday

Lions are early risers. On most mornings, your mind is already racing as soon as the sun comes up. That's why you are more likely to have the energy for that early morning shift or meeting.

Take advantage of your energy and start the day with your most taxing tasks. After 9 a.m. your brain is primed for big picture, strategic thinking. Lions should schedule important meetings, communications and interviews after this time. Your mind is ready to be highly analytical and you will be best equipped to make clear-headed decisions.

By noon your energy levels will start tapering off. You can avoid the afternoon slump by going out to lunch with coworkers, indulging in a cup of coffee, or taking a walk. Save the afternoon for your lighter tasks, or leverage your creativity by leading a brainstorming session.

Organization and planning
7:00 – 8:00 a.m.

Important, focused, problem-solving tasks
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Job interviews
9:00 a.m.

Work lunches
12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Brainstorming
1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Busy work
3:00 – 5:00 p.m.



Manage Your Relationships

Lions often wake up ready to go and rush off to work while the rest of the world is still waking up, pushing their relationships off until they're home from work. While others may not match your morning energy, this is actually one of the best times for you to be social – whether that's connecting with your partner, calling your grandparents, or catching up with an old friend.

Have sex
6:00 – 7:00 a.m.

Call family or friends
7:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Have an important conversation with your partner
9:00 a.m.

See your therapist
12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Spend time with your kids
3:00 p.m.



Lions may also notice sexual desire is strongest in the morning, when testosterone levels are highest. It's one of the better times for lions to enjoy some intimacy and enjoy an early dose of oxytocin.

Unfortunately, lions can experience difficulties in the evening hours as they tend to have a very early bedtime. It's recommended that lions capitalize on time with their kids around 3 p.m., before their patience dips and their mood declines.

When to Sip, Snack, and Splurge



Eat a high-protein breakfast
6:00 – 7:00 a.m.

Have coffee
7:30 –10:00 a.m.

Snack time
9:00 a.m.

Eat a balanced lunch
12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Happy hour
4:00 – 7:30 p.m.

Eat dinner
6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Lions should make time to eat a high-protein, low-carb breakfast as soon as possible to fuel their naturally high energy in the morning. Eating within 30 minutes of waking up is usually best for lions. Mid-morning coffee and snacks will help keep your momentum going until lunch, where lions typically have energy dips. Avoid having any caffeine in the afternoon, or it'll affect your sleep later.

When it comes to lunch, eat a balanced meal rich with nutrients and energy-boosting ingredients. After lunch, prepare for an afternoon slump. This is a physiological battle most lions can't really win. If possible, treat yourself and eat outside for some extra sunlight and vitamin D exposure.

Hormonally, late afternoon is one of the best times for lions to process alcohol, so try starting happy hour earlier and keep yourself from drinking too much or too late. Alcohol will eventually make you feel sleepier, and if you drink too close to bedtime, it'll disrupt your sleep. Aim to stop drinking well before 7:30, if you can.

Lastly, be careful at dinner. A carb-heavy meal will decrease a lion's already dwindling cortisol level and knock you out early. Go for a more balanced dinner to keep yourself moving until it's really time for bed.

Streamline Your Fitness Goals

Lions wake up with surging cortisol levels. They have a tendency to exercise at dawn because they're up and ready to roll. Don't push it, though. Rigorous exercise early in the morning will only increase your cortisol levels and heart rate. If you're going to be active in the morning, focus on gently attuning the rest of your body through yoga or stretching.

Practice yoga	Play a team sport	Strength train	Go for a run
8:00 a.m. or 5:00 p.m.	2:00 – 4:00 p.m.	2:30 – 6:00 p.m.	5:30 p.m.

Save the rigorous exercise for the afternoon. This can include playing a team sport, hitting the gym, or even just taking a walk around the block. Since lions often feel a dip in the afternoon, the physical activity will give you an energy surge right when you need it.

Similarly, you can get an energy boost when you're lagging in the evening by going for a run. Lions are typically overachieving and prioritize health and fitness, so it's important that lions plan a routine that benefits their schedule as well as their chronotype.



Discovering your chronotype

Chronotype refers to your body's natural tendency to feel alert or sleepy at certain times of the day and night, among other things. This is different from your circadian rhythm, which regulates your sleep-wake cycle and some other bodily functions. Both are run by the internal master clock in your brain, it's just that these clocks run at different speeds for different people. People naturally wake up, feel productive, get hungry, get tired, and fall asleep at different times — your natural schedule for these preferences defines your chronotype.

The major difference between the two is **how changeable they are**. Your circadian rhythm can be adjusted by managing light exposure and using other techniques to change your sleep schedule. People who work nights have often retrained their circadian rhythms to allow them to sleep during the day.

Your chronotype can't be trained in the same way. It may change on its own over the course of your life, but your chronotype is largely influenced by your genetics. If you tend to be a morning person or a night owl, that's not something that you're really able to change even if you adjust your sleep schedule. If you find that you're getting full nights of sleep, but you're often waking up groggy or feeling like you slept terribly, you may be on a schedule that doesn't align with your chronotype.



If you haven't already, you can find your chronotype using our chronotype quiz.
There are four major chronotypes. Here's a quick rundown of the four chronotypes:



Lions are your classic morning people. They prefer to go to bed early, wake up early, and they're typically most productive before 12 p.m. Lions will typically wake up before the sun rises, around 5 a.m., and they naturally turn in for the night before 10 p.m. The working world is set up in favor of lions, who can show up to a typical workday bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

Bears are the most common chronotype. Bears fill a wider range of preferred times when it comes to sleeping and waking, but generally speaking their bodies follow the sun. Bears do best when they wake up with the sun in the early morning, and start winding down as the sun sets at night. They're typically most productive between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.





Wolves are the late risers of the world. Wolves prefer to go to bed around or after midnight, they usually wake up later in the day, and they're usually most productive between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. They often get boosts of energy in the evening, with some wolves finding they do their best work at night. Wolves are often most at odds with the hours of a typical workday.

Dolphins are the rarest chronotype of the bunch. Dolphins tend to be sensitive sleepers who sleep light, waking up easily. As a result, dolphins typically find their sleep is interrupted, often struggle with insomnia, and they generally struggle the most when it comes to forming a consistent sleep schedule. They're often productive between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.



Your chronotype does more than just tell you when your body wants to sleep. Chronotypes connect to your body's preferences for when to eat, exercise, work, and more. Adjusting your schedule to follow your chronotype can help you get in better sync with your body's natural rhythms, and may help improve your sleep quality and other areas of life.



What you need to know

- Chronotype refers to the natural schedule of your body's tendency to feel alert, sleepy, productive, and more
- Chronotypes are related to your circadian rhythm, but they're genetic and may change on their own but can't be actively retrained
- There are four major chronotypes:
  - Lions are "early to bed, early to rise" people who typically wake up at or before sunrise
  - Bears fill the widest range of preferred sleep and wake times, but their bodies generally follow the sun when it comes to waking up and winding down
  - Wolves are late risers who prefer to go to bed around or after midnight and usually wake up later in the day
  - Dolphins are sensitive sleepers who wake easily and generally struggle with forming a consistent sleep schedule
- If your schedule goes against your chronotype, you may experience poor quality sleep even if you're getting a full night's sleep every night

The power of a sleep coach

Sleep coaches are professionals who work directly with clients to help them sleep better. Sleep coaching is a great option for anyone who wants better sleep, but needs one-on-one guidance in the right direction. If you're feeling overwhelmed trying to set up a plan of action to get better sleep, a sleep coach can help you get organized and set up with a plan.

Sleep coaches offer a wide variety of services, since there aren't set standard practice guidelines, educational requirements, or certifications out there to work as a sleep coach. Some coaches help you set up daily routines, improve your sleep habits, help you track your sleep, and support you as you make changes toward better sleep. Other coaches may use a variety of therapeutic techniques like cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia.

As you research different sleep coaches, we recommend asking yourself the following questions:

- How important is a sleep coach's educational background and formal training to you?
- Do you know anyone who has worked with a sleep coach they would recommend?
- Which styles of coaching make you feel the most — and least — comfortable? What feels right for your needs?

Most sleep coaching starts with a one-on-one consultation. Your coach will typically use this session to get to know you and your unique sleep challenges. During your second session, your coach will typically start working with you to put together a long-term sleep improvement plan. As you work toward your goals, you'll check in with your coach and discuss your progress.

What you need to know

- Sleep coaches are professionals who work directly with clients to guide them toward better sleep
- Sleep coaching comes in a variety of styles, so it's important to find a coach whose style matches your wants and needs
- If you want to make improvements to your sleep, but you don't want to figure everything out yourself, sleep coaches can be a great resource

Building better daily habits

Just as your sleep has a significant impact on your waking life, the choices you make every day deeply affect your sleep. Making changes to your caffeine intake, fitness, and other lifestyle factors can have a direct effect on your sleep quality.

We'll start by giving you the rundown on how to build healthy habits that will stick. Then, we'll tell you a bit about your cortisol cycle and how you can help reset your personal clock to improve your sleep. Lastly, we'll walk you through some of the major daily problem areas that can interfere with sleep, like alcohol, caffeine, electronics, light exposure, and more.

We'll provide you with clear guidelines and goals in each section to guide you toward better sleep. Focus on the sections that are most important for you personally, where you have the most room to make a change. Start where you can, do what you can, and aim for consistency as you build daily habits.

Habit building 101

You're reading this guidebook because you want to do what you can to get better sleep. In other words, you have *motivation*. Motivation can get you started in making changes, while working to turn those changes into habits is what will make them last.

By working the changes you want to see into your routine and repeating them consistently over time, they become second nature, something you do almost automatically. In other words, you don't have to rely on motivation or put in too much effort once you build a habit. You're used to doing something so consistently that you can just do it without thinking too much about it.

There isn't a set number of times you have to repeat a practice in order for it to become a habit. Everyone forms habits in their own way, but there are general guidelines that you can follow. Remember that consistency is key, any progress is a step in the right direction, and not to let perfect get in the way of good. You can't rush habit building. Results will come with time, you just have to stay consistent and trust in the process.

You can use what you learn in this section with all the others to set up changes in your life and stick to them. We go in depth on **building better wake-up routines and bedtime routines** in other parts of this guidebook, so check those sections out for focused takes. Here are our top tips for building better habits.

Make your goals specific

If you set your goals in a very specific way, you know exactly what you need to do in order to achieve them. "I want to stop drinking coffee too late in the day" or "I want to stop looking at my phone before I go to bed" are really vague. How do you know if you've done either of those things? Should you stop looking at your phone 10 minutes before bed? 30 minutes? An hour? Setting specific goals gives you structure and lets you know you're making progress.

Instead of saying "I want to stop drinking coffee too late in the day," try going a step deeper. The vague statement is the idea of the result that you want. It's up to you to define what that looks like. Ask yourself questions to get thinking. How late in the day is "too late" for you? When is a good cutoff point? Making this goal specific would look something like "I am going to stop drinking coffee for the day at 2 p.m."

Start small and make it easy to do

The easier your new habit is to do, the more likely you are to do it. Once the habit you're trying to build starts to be part of your routine, you can adjust it.

One way to make a habit easier is to change your environment. If you want to go to the gym in the morning, maybe you start sleeping in your exercise clothes so you're ready to go when you wake up. If you want to stay off your phone before bed, maybe you start storing it in another room when you go to bed.

The other way to make a habit "easy" is to start small and build it up. If your goal is to exercise for 30 minutes every day so you can sleep better at night, you might start out by just exercising for 5 minutes every day at the same time. Five minutes is easier to do than 30 minutes, better than 0 minutes, and it starts building the habit of exercising daily.

After you've gotten used to exercising at the same time every day, you can slowly move your goal over time. You can move from 5 minutes to 6 minutes and slowly work your way up to 30. Don't try to move too quickly here or you might burn yourself out. Focus on being consistent with a habit first before trying to grow it.

Use cues, reminders, and schedules

Cues are triggers for habits, and they can come in many different forms. The simplest way to put it is when you experience a cue, it triggers you to then follow through on your habit.

Forming habits is about consistency and repetition, so scheduling out specific times to do something every day is a great way to try to build a habit. Setting alarms and reminders can help you remember.

Another way to build a cue is giving yourself a condition like "When X happens, I'll do Y." Set up a specific moment or circumstance for yourself and tell yourself you're going to act when that moment happens. You might say, "When I get home from work, I'm going to change and go for a run" or "At 9:30, I'm going to turn my phone off and put it in the other room so I don't use it in bed." Try saying it out loud to yourself a few times to help it sink in.

Some people use existing habits as cues to build new habits. If you already brush your teeth at the same time before going to bed, then you can follow it up with a new habit you're trying to build. Over time, you'll move from your habit of brushing your teeth straight into your new habit.

Don't try to do everything at once

Trying to build too many habits at once can be overwhelming, and is more likely to stress you out than help you actually make progress. It's best to keep a narrow focus and build new habits slowly in rounds.

Identify the areas of your life that are getting in the way of your sleep the most and target those first. Pick just a few habits that you want to build that will make change in these problem areas. Focus on building these habits up until they're basically automatic before trying to add more to your list.

Find ways to make it fun or use rewards

Habits are easier to build when they're fun and rewarding to us. If you're trying to exercise regularly to get better sleep, then exercise that you like is going to be easier to stick to than something you don't like. If you don't like running, but you enjoy yoga or dance, then don't force yourself to run.

That being said, not all habits are going to have a "fun" way to do them. For these habits, we can either add rewards or find ways to pair them up with things you really enjoy doing. Let's say you want to run on the treadmill for 30 minutes every day, but you hate doing it. You have a couple options:

1. **You can reward yourself after doing the not fun activity**. Maybe you get yourself a nice smoothie after getting off the treadmill, or maybe you get to watch one of your favorite shows for an hour on days where you go on the treadmill. Connect a specific reward to doing the not fun activity and only allow yourself to have that specific reward if you do the not fun activity.

2. **You can also try pairing the not fun activity with something you find fun.** Lots of people use this method without thinking about it, like listening to music on a long drive or watching a TV show while you fold laundry. Maybe you can only watch one of your favorite shows while you're on the treadmill. Make sure you pick a specific fun activity and try to only let yourself do that fun activity while doing the specific not fun activity.

If you miss a day, accept it and keep going

Try to maintain your momentum when you've got a good streak going for a habit. Missing a habit you're trying to build once in a while is fine, but if you keep missing it you'll end up derailing yourself and losing your progress. Don't get down on yourself, just accept when you have slip ups, and try to come back the next day ready to keep your streak going.

What you need to know

- Make your goals specific
- Make your new habits easy to do
  - Find ways to make it easy to follow through
  - Start slow in easy mode and expand after you're consistent with a habit
- Use cues and reminders to set a structure for your habits
- Existing habits can be a good starting point for building new, related habits
- Limit yourself to building a maximum of only a few habits at a time
- Habits are easier to build when they're fun and rewarding
- Try pairing habits that aren't fun with specific, fun activities
- Stay consistent and maintain momentum
- If you miss a day, accept it and keep trying

Resetting your metabolic clock

Cortisol is one of the hormones behind your **"fight-or-flight" response** during stressful situations. Healthy increases in your cortisol levels are useful in short-term, temporary situations where you have to be alert and ready to act, like when you're driving in bad weather or you have an important deadline for work.

Along with helping you deal with stressful situations, cortisol is one of the driving factors behind waking up and going to bed. Your cortisol levels naturally rise and fall throughout the day as a part of **your circadian rhythm and 24-hour sleep-wake cycle**. Your body produces cortisol when the sun rises to energize you and prepare you for the day. For most people, cortisol levels peak around 9 a.m., gradually fade throughout the day, and hit their lowest point around midnight.

The problem is that if your cortisol levels are too high for too long as a result of long-term stress, it can lead to health problems, including a lack of sleep. When you're not getting enough sleep, your body makes more cortisol, leading to a vicious cycle. If you're too stressed during the day, you get worse sleep, and if you're not getting enough sleep, then it'll be easier to stay stressed because your cortisol levels are high.

If you're going through chronic, long-term stress, then finding healthy ways to manage it is one of the best steps you can take to help break the cycle. Your overall goal should be to reset your cortisol levels back down into a healthy balance, which can take some time. Thankfully, there are a few things you can do in the short-term to help regulate your cortisol levels and regain some sleep while you figure out how to manage your stress.

Get outside

One of the quickest and easiest ways to bring down your cortisol levels is to **spend at least 15 minutes outside each day**. Get outside and expose yourself to natural light to help realign your circadian rhythm with the sun's natural cycle. It's similar to hitting a reset button on your body's cycle of producing cortisol by telling your body what time of day it is.

Take a cold shower in the morning

Cold water entering your body or touching your skin creates an energy boost as your body adjusts to the extreme temperature change — if you've ever jumped into a cold swimming pool or lake, then you know how awake it makes you feel. People who plunge themselves in cold water tend to see reductions in cortisol levels. As your body adjusts to the cold, your cortisol levels drop.

Taking a cold shower after you get up in the morning can help wake you up and lower your cortisol levels, leaving you feeling refreshed and ready for the day. We know that jumping into a cold shower isn't easy, so we recommend slowly lowering the temperature over a few days to help you adjust. Take your time and approach a cold shower gradually.

Breathe

Controlled deep breathing techniques can help you manage your cortisol levels. There are plenty of options out there that are tied to mindfulness, meditation, and yoga practices, which can also be calming pre-bed activities.

There's one form of controlled breathing called **box breathing** that can help you adjust to a cold shower, help lower your heart rate, and help keep your cortisol levels down. If you want to try box breathing, you just need these four steps:

1. Breathe in for a count of four
2. Hold your breath for a count of four
3. Breathe out for a count of four
4. Hold your breath for a count of four

We recommend box breathing when you first get into a cold shower, as well as doing 5 to 7 rounds of box breathing when you get out of the shower. You can also use box breathing and other techniques throughout the day when you need to take a step back and relax.

Drink cold water in the morning

If taking a cold shower sounds too extreme, you can try pouring yourself a cool glass of water first thing in the morning. Drinking cold water won't affect your cortisol levels as much as taking a cold shower, but it might give you enough of an energy boost to get your day started on the right foot. Your body also tends to get dehydrated during sleep, so a glass of water can help.

Get cold water on your face

Another step down from a full-on cold shower is using cold water on your face. For many people, this means using cold water to wash their face in the morning. You might also try holding your breath and dunking your face in a bowl of cold water for a few seconds to get a few steps closer to a cold shower.

Wait 90 minutes before drinking coffee or having caffeine

If you usually drink coffee, an energy drink, or have some other form of caffeine soon after you get out of bed, then **wait 90 minutes before you have any caffeine**. Caffeine can help you feel more awake, but it also interferes with your body's internal clock, including its natural rise and fall of cortisol levels.

Your cortisol levels rise to help wake you up before peaking and starting to lower. If you wait at least 90 minutes after you wake up before having caffeine, you give your body a chance to naturally lower your cortisol levels and get into its natural rhythm for the day.

Exercise in the morning

Working out first or second thing in the morning can help you wake up by raising your heart rate and align with your naturally rising cortisol levels as they peak. If you can, **exercise outside** so you get the added boost of exposing your body to natural light and helping further regulate your cortisol levels.

Morning exercise releases endorphins, or "feel good" hormones, that improve your mood and help regulate cortisol



production for the rest of the day. By working out early in your day, you're also giving your body plenty of time to wind down before it's time for bed.

Morning exercise won't work for everyone, and that's alright. There's no one-size-fits-all approach to an exercise routine that'll work for everyone. If you usually work out at night and you're having trouble sleeping, it may be worth trying to exercise earlier in the day so you're giving your body plenty of time to wind down before bed.

Don't work out too hard

Exercising will usually do more to help regulate your cortisol levels than no exercise. That being said, if your cortisol levels are too high due to chronic stress, then pushing yourself too hard while working out can end up adding to your stress. If your exercise routine is usually pretty intense, try swapping in some more gentle, relaxing forms of exercise to reduce the strain on your body.

What you need to know

- Your body naturally produces cortisol in a natural rhythm to help you wake up, wind down for sleep, and deal with short-term, stressful situations
- Long-term, chronic stress can keep your cortisol levels too high for too long, getting in the way of healthy sleep
- Getting outside during daylight for at least 15 minutes can help to reset your cortisol levels when they're out of their natural rhythm
- Shower using cold water after you wake up to help you feel more alert and lower your cortisol levels naturally
- Use deep breathing techniques like box breathing to help lower cortisol
- Drink a glass of cold water to help you wake up and rehydrate
- Wash your face with cold water or try dunking your face in a bowl of cold water to help you wake up
- Wait 90 minutes after you wake up to have coffee or caffeine in the morning to allow your cortisol levels to naturally lower
- Try exercising in the morning to help regulate your cortisol levels for the rest of the day

Alcohol and caffeine

Both alcohol and caffeine affect your sleep in a variety of ways. Drinking alcohol may help you fall asleep faster, but it's likely to disrupt your sleep and reduce your sleep quality later in the night. Drinking caffeine throughout the day can make falling asleep take longer and even cause insomnia-like symptoms. Both alcohol and caffeine alter your sleep architecture, or the amount of time a person spends in each stage of sleep.

Although alcohol and caffeine often negatively impact sleep, many people can still have them in moderation and go on to get a good night's rest. The key is to use these substances mindfully, taking into consideration how and when you're consuming them.

Cutting out alcohol and coffee completely may technically be the best move for better sleep, but we recognize that's not exactly a realistic goal for most people. We recommend starting by taking a clear look at your current alcohol and caffeine consumption habits, then work on building some achievable, meaningful reductions in your alcohol and caffeine intake where you can.

Set some long-term goals for changing the ways you consume alcohol and caffeine, whether that's lowering the amount you have per day or stopping your consumption earlier in the day. Give yourself looser goals to start — like only having four drinks maximum a day — then move the goalposts slowly over time as you consistently meet your targets. Keep going and keep trying until you meet your long-term goals, even if you stumble along the way. Progress is not always a straight line from point A to point B, and any progress is a step in the right direction.



Quick tips to get started

- Try to stick to one alcoholic drink or less per day for women and two drinks or less per day for men
- Consider limiting your caffeine intake to 400 milligrams per day (about four 8oz cups of coffee a day)
- Avoid caffeine for at least 6 hours before you go to sleep (8-10 hours is better)
- Have your last alcoholic drink at least 1 hour before sleep (2-3 hours is better)
- Caffeine and alcohol sensitivity varies, so you may need to consume even less than guidelines suggest to get good quality sleep

Alcohol

Alcohol use is very common, with nearly 86% of adult Americans having drunk alcohol in their lifetime and nearly 70% in the last year. Alcohol acts as a depressant, which means it decreases activity in the central nervous system.

Many people think that alcohol helps you sleep, but that is only true when it comes to falling asleep. **Drinking can help you fall asleep faster, but it harms sleep overall**. After drinking, you're likely to find yourself waking up frequently and getting poor quality sleep as a result. Alcohol consumption may also worsen certain sleep disorders, like obstructive sleep apnea.

Alcohol can also interfere with your body's production of the key players in your sleep-wake cycle including cortisol, adenosine, and melatonin. That can throw off your circadian rhythm and ultimately make you feel more tired and groggy in the morning. Overall, alcohol use before bed has the potential to decrease the quality of your sleep, shorten the time that you are asleep, and lead to next-day fatigue and sleepiness.

That's not to say that you need to quit drinking entirely to get better sleep. Plenty of people are able to responsibly enjoy alcohol and get restful sleep. The real point here is to **be mindful of how and when you're consuming alcohol**, especially as you get closer to bedtime.

Will a small amount of alcohol affect my sleep?

Studies show that drinking even a small amount of alcohol can disrupt sleep, and that the **more a person drinks, the more their sleep is affected**. Your body can only process so much alcohol per hour and the more you drink, the more likely you are to experience negative sleep outcomes.

While alcohol negatively impacts sleep, we recognize that it can be hard to avoid drinking at times. If alcohol is affecting your sleep, try noting how much you currently drink and start slowly reducing the amount of alcohol you consume close to bed over time. Any amount of reduction is a step in the direction of better sleep. For a good rule of thumb, aim to **have your last drink at least 2-3 hours before it's time for bed**.



The study we mentioned used a mathematical equation factoring in body weight to define drinking categories, but government organizations generally categorize alcohol consumption by how many drinks a person has per day. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture defines moderate drinking as one drink or less per day for women and two drinks or less per day for men.

Heavy drinking is defined as four or more drinks on any given day for men and three or more drinks on a given day for women.

The size of a single "drink" varies depending on the type of alcohol. For example, 12 fluid ounces of beer is considered one drink and would be counted the same as 5 fluid ounces of wine or a 1.5 fluid ounce shot of liquor, like vodka or whiskey.

How to drink less alcohol before bed

Try to reduce your nighttime alcohol intake to avoid negatively impacting your sleep Here are some tips for drinking less in the evenings:

- Drink water or other non-alcoholic drinks before drinking alcohol, so you stay hydrated and don't have more alcoholic drinks out of thirst
- Set a limit for how many alcoholic drinks you'll have in advance, then keep track as you drink and stop once you reach your limit
- Only have a drink when you want one, and avoid taking an alcoholic drink just because it's offered to you
- Go for drinks with a lower alcohol percentage
- Swap out an alcoholic nightcap for something else, like chamomile tea, which may promote sleep

What you need to know

- Alcohol may help you fall asleep faster, but it can harm sleep overall, leading to multiple negative impacts on sleep
- You can still enjoy alcohol responsibly and get quality sleep, but it's important to be mindful of how and when you're drinking
- The more a person drinks, the more their sleep tends to be affected
- Aim to stop drinking at least 2-3 hours before it's time for bed
- Try to stick to one alcoholic drink or less per day for women and two drinks or less per day for men

Daytime caffeine

Worldwide, caffeine is the most commonly used stimulant. Caffeine is naturally in drinks like coffee and tea and is added to energy drinks and certain sodas. People often use caffeine to make themselves feel more awake, but it can negatively affect sleep. People using caffeine may have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.

Caffeine also alters how a person sleeps, delaying when they enter rapid eye movement sleep and leading to increased tiredness upon waking. Consuming caffeine even six hours before bedtime has been found to disrupt sleep.

Since caffeine boosts alertness, caffeine use can potentially mask a sleep disorder, like obstructive sleep apnea. Caffeine may also worsen other sleep-related issues, like restless legs syndrome.

Common caffeinated drinks

Many drinks contain caffeine, here's a quick overview of the most common ones.

Beverage	Serving size	Caffeine per serving	Caffeine level
Coffee	8 fl oz	75 – 300 mg	High caffeine
Energy drinks	8 fl oz	70 – 150 mg	Moderate to high caffeine
Black and green teas	8 fl oz	20 – 100 mg	Low to moderate caffeine
Caffeinated soft drinks	12 fl oz	20 – 70 mg	Low to moderate caffeine
Caffeinated water	12 fl oz	30 – 100 mg	Low to moderate caffeine
Coffee liqueur	1 fl oz	9 mg	Low caffeine
Decaf coffee	8 fl oz	2 – 15 mg	Low caffeine

How to keep caffeine from affecting your sleep

It's possible for most people to safely consume caffeine without it hurting their sleep. Here are some quick general guidelines:

- Wait at least 90 minutes in the morning before having caffeine to help your body reduce cortisol levels and bring your natural cortisol rhythm back into balance
- Only consume caffeine in the morning or early afternoon, since caffeine can affect sleep even 8 hours after you have it
- Limit yourself to 400 milligrams of caffeine in a day
- Cut back on caffeine if it interferes with your ability to get at least 7 hours of sleep per night
- Pay attention to your tiredness levels before you have caffeine, since caffeine can mask tiredness from sleep deprivation or sleep disorders

How to have less caffeine

There are a few quick tactics you can try to consume less caffeine:

- Set a specific time of day where you stop consuming caffeine, and stick to it
- Swap out some of your coffee for a less caffeinated option, like black or green tea, herbal teas, or decaffeinated coffee
- Use sunlight exposure or a blue-enriched light therapy lamp to boost your morning energy
- Eat a healthy breakfast for a morning energy boost and wait to have your first cup of coffee

What you need to know

- Caffeine is widely used to help people feel more awake, but it can have negative effects on sleep
- Caffeine stays in your system for a while, so try to stop consuming caffeine at least 8-10 hours before you go to sleep
- Wait at least 90 minutes in the morning before having caffeine
- Limit yourself to 400 mg of caffeine daily
- If you want to cut back on caffeine, try some options with lower caffeine levels
- Set hard limits for yourself on when and how much caffeine you should have, and stick to those limits

Exercise, diet, and sleep

Your sleep has a strong impact on nearly all aspects of your health, and engaging in healthy practices during the day can have positive effects on your ability to sleep well at night. **Exercise, diet, and sleep are often considered the three pillars of good health.** We've put together important information and hot tips to help you find ways to adjust how you exercise and what you eat for better sleep.

We know making major changes to your diet and exercise can be hard, both in terms of knowing where to start and in making changes that will last. Use our tips to help you look into the ways that your exercise and diet currently play into your life, and the ways they currently affect your sleep.

We recommend coming up with larger goals and making small, consistent changes over time to get there. Use our tips to make small steps toward those larger goals until each small step is a part of your everyday life. Start by making changes where you can, when you can. Remember, any progress is a step in the right direction.

Why exercise?

Exercise has benefits beyond improving your sleep. Regular exercise can help people live longer and experience fewer chronic illnesses. Regular aerobic exercise can help people quit smoking, improve sleep, decrease stress levels, and increase quality of life.

We'll provide some information about the different types of exercise and some best practices to help you approach exercising at your own pace. Building and sticking with an exercise routine can be difficult, so it's ok to start with what you can do for now and regularly increase your activity level to a point that's good for you and your sleep.

Types of exercise

Exercise is often sorted by types, such as aerobic, strength, and mobility exercises. Some exercises only fit the criteria of one of these categories, while other exercises can help a person develop in more than one area at once.

Aerobic exercise: Aerobic activity, also called cardio, increases your heart rate and breathing, providing benefits to your heart and lungs. Aerobic exercise can be described as moderate or vigorous-intensity depending on how much it increases your heart rate. Examples include running, swimming, and tennis.

Strength exercise: Strength training, also called resistance training, aims to increase muscle strength. Examples include weight lifting, resistance band exercises, and bodyweight exercises, like push-ups.

Mobility exercise: Mobility exercises help people maintain a full range of motion, so they can easily perform daily activities. These exercises typically involve stretching and increasing flexibility and do not count as aerobic or strength exercise time. Stretches are often best done after other types of exercise, when muscles are warm.

How much should I exercise?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), adults should engage in **moderate-intensity exercise** for a total of at least **150 minutes per week.** This activity can be broken up into smaller chunks of time. For example, you might **exercise for half an hour, five days per week**. Additionally, the CDC recommends also engaging in some type of full-body strength training at least twice a week.

Meeting the recommended amount of exercise per week can seem overwhelming if you don't have an exercise routine. Try focusing on the **150 minutes per week as a long-term goal to start**, **something you'll work your way up to with time**. Staying active to the degree that you can is worth your time, and will help you get in the habit. **Walking regularly is a good place to start, even if it's as short as 15 minutes a day.**



Lastly, adults who spend less time sitting experience health benefits, so if your job or hobbies involve sitting for long periods, try to break that up. Stand up, walk around, and look for ways to naturally incorporate more movement into your day. Taking just a few minutes out of every hour to get standing and moving is a great place to start.

What time should I exercise?

There isn't a one-size-fits-all best time to exercise. Some people work out better at different times of day, and some people can only work out at certain times due to busy schedules. A good rule of thumb may be to avoid exercising too close to bed if you can help it, but everyone is different.

Pay attention to how the time you exercise affects your sleep, and adjust your exercise schedule as much as you can. It's typically best to have at least a few hours between working out and bedtime, so you have plenty of time to wind down.

If you exercise outdoors, the time of day you are exposed to sunlight may impact your sleep. Bright light exposure in the morning helps you fall asleep earlier at night and wake up earlier in the morning. Bright light exposure in the two hours before you sleep might make you stay up later at night and wake up later in the morning. Some people find that exercising in the morning helps them to wake up and works well with the natural rhythm of a wake-up routine.

What you need to know

- Exercise is one of the three pillars of good health, and can have positive impacts on your sleep
- A good goal to work up to is at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week
- Exercising when you can, however you can is better than no exercise at all
- A good way to get started is by walking at least 15 minutes per day
- There is no one-size-fits-all best time to exercise, some people work out better at different times of day, and some people have limited schedules
- A good rule of thumb is to avoid exercising too close to bed, try to give yourself at least a few hours so you have plenty of time to wind down

Food and sleep

Diet is shaped by a person's culture, personal preferences, budget, and other factors. That being said, there are plenty of foods out there you can work into your diet to promote better sleep. Making healthy food choices can also reduce your risk of heart disease, cancer, stroke, and other health problems in addition to helping with your sleep.

We know that changing your diet isn't always easy, and some foods are going to be more expensive or hard to find depending on where you live. Try to focus on what you can change, what in your diet is affecting your sleep, and where you can spend your time and energy to make changes. Make healthy substitutions and changes where you can over time. Keep track of any changes to your sleep, and celebrate any progress that you make.

When to eat (and when to stop eating)

Just as what you eat is important, so is when you eat. Meal timing has been found to impact your circadian rhythm as well as your sleep quality.

Eating too much or eating too close to bedtime can lead to indigestion, heartburn, and other discomfort. These symptoms can make it harder to fall asleep, and also interrupt your sleep.

As a rule of thumb, avoid eating around two to three hours before you sleep. If you're planning on a feast or a larger meal than usual, aim to eat in the early evening and try to stay awake long enough to give your body some time to digest. If you can't avoid eating close to your bedtime, then try to stop eating as early as you can before bed and avoid eating heavy meals.

When it comes to liquids, try to drink fluids earlier in the day and avoid them near bedtime. Drinking too much liquid at night can interrupt your sleep by making you wake up during the night to use the restroom. A good rule of thumb here is to stop drinking fluids about an hour before you sleep and use the restroom before going to bed.

What foods to avoid before bed

Avoid the following at least two to three hours before you go to bed:

- Alcohol
- Caffeine (coffee, some teas, and chocolate)
- Drinking too many fluids before bedtime
- Foods made with added sugars
- Heavy meals
- Spicy foods

What foods to eat for better sleep

Studies suggest that a healthy, balanced diet is linked to better sleep. For example, the Mediterranean diet – which is high in fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, whole grains, and fish – contains many nutrients that promote sleep. Try to incorporate foods associated with better sleep into your diet however you can. A well-rounded diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, and balanced nutrition will go a long way toward promoting healthy sleep. Here's a quick list of known sleep-boosting foods you can try adding to your diet for better sleep:

- Tuna, salmon, and other fatty fish
- Whole grains
- Nuts and Seeds
- Kiwis
- Tart cherries
- Dark, leafy greens like spinach or kale

What you need to know

- Your diet is one of the three pillars of good health
- Changing your diet can be difficult, so focus on how your diet is affecting your sleep, and make the changes that you can over time
- When you eat is also important – avoid eating around 2 to 3 hours before bedtime, and avoid fluids around 1 hour before bedtime
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, sugar, and anything that will upset your stomach before bed
- For most people these are foods that are too fatty, greasy, heavy, or spicy
- There are plenty of sleep-promoting foods out there, like fish, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and fruits to name a few
- A well-rounded diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, and balanced nutrition will go a long way toward promoting healthy sleep

Managing exposure to light

Light plays a primary role when it comes to guiding our circadian rhythm and our sleep-wake cycle. Exposure to light signals to your body that it's time to feel alert. Exposure to darkness triggers the release of melatonin, the sleep hormone, signaling that it's time to fall asleep. Knowing what to manage in your life when it comes to light will help you to guide your body to better sleep.

Watch out for blue light

Blue light in particular suppresses the natural release of melatonin, so blue light helps keep us awake longer if we're exposed to it. The sun is our major source of blue light and helps us stay awake and alert during the day.

Our modern world is full of artificial sources of blue light, which means we have plenty of opportunities to keep ourselves up. LED lights, smartphones, computers, tablets, and other electronic devices commonly give off blue light, which can make it harder to fall asleep if we use them too close to bedtime. The less we look at screens before bed, the better, but stopping at least an hour before bedtime is a great place to start.

Welcome light when it's time to wake up

Exposure to light can help tell your body that it's time to wake up. Sunlight streaming in on your eyes is a great way to help you wake up naturally, though indoor lighting is much easier to work with. Some lights and lamps can be set to turn on at preset times to help you get up, but you can always try turning a bedside light on when you wake up to keep you from falling back asleep. As we've mentioned before, getting at least 15 minutes of sunlight in the morning can help to tune your circadian rhythm and help you wake up.



Use soft lighting or dimmable bulbs at night

Bright lights may or may not give off blue light, but they can be jarring and make it harder to wind down for bed. Try using dimmable lights or softer lighting in the later half of the night to help you relax before you sleep. Bathroom lights are a common source of bright light at night, so finding a way to bring softer lighting into your bathroom will help you stay relaxed as you prepare for bed.

Quick tips to avoid nighttime light exposure

- Use a dim table lamp rather than bright overhead lights in the hours before bed
- Avoid looking at electronic screens at least an hour before bed
- Buy blackout curtains and close them, so early morning sunlight doesn't shine in through the window
- Turn off hallway lights, or any light that could shine in from under the door
- Use motion-sensitive night lights in your hallways and bathroom to provide subtle nighttime light, so you don't have to turn on bright overhead lights
- Use a sleep mask or piece of fabric to cover your eyes during sleep to block out extra light

What you need to know

- Exposure to light helps our body know when we should wake up or fall asleep
- Blue light in particular helps keep us awake, so we should be careful about artificial sources of blue light in the evening
- Exposure to light in the morning can help you wake up, try getting at least 15 minutes of sunlight in the morning if you can
- Use soft lighting in the later part of the night to help you relax before bed, and avoid bright lighting

Electronics usage

Blue light from electronics and screens mimics the natural blue light from the sun that drives our circadian rhythm. Even a little bit of blue light at night can have a negative effect and make it harder to fall asleep. Since many people enjoy watching TV or using devices with a screen to wind down at night, blue light may be impacting their sleep. That's why it's important to be mindful about using electronics at night and set some guidelines to help you get better sleep.

Bringing technology into the bedroom is a bad idea overall. Using screens before bed can affect our natural production of melatonin and the presence of screens can be distracting if you're trying to sleep. We've put together some guidelines and quick tips to help manage electronics so you can get better sleep.

Avoid technology for an hour before sleep

Exposure to artificial light in the evening can make sleeping more difficult, and the blue light emitted from your television, smart phone, tablet, or laptop has a more intense effect than indoor lighting. Blue light exposure keeps your brain from releasing melatonin, a hormone that promotes sleep.

The earlier in the night you can stop using screens the better, but aim for at least an hour of no screen time before bed to start. Try to avoid technology before sleep by taking care of any emails or text messages you need to send earlier in the evening. Also, try not to fall asleep watching television.

Keep your phone out of bed

Even using your phone for a relaxing activity like reading can keep you from falling asleep. If, like many people, you feel a strong urge to regularly check your phone, keeping it in another room altogether might help. If you share your bedroom with others, try to get them on board, too. It turns out phone checking is contagious, with many people checking their phones within 30 seconds after seeing someone else check theirs.



Keep other screens out of the bedroom too

Try to keep larger screens like televisions, laptops, and computer monitors out of view when you're in bed. Looking around and seeing these screens can distract you or remind you of work or other things you have to do when you're trying to wind down. Avoid using any of these technologies while you're in bed too — try to keep bed as a place for sleeping only in your mind.

Try blue light blocking glasses

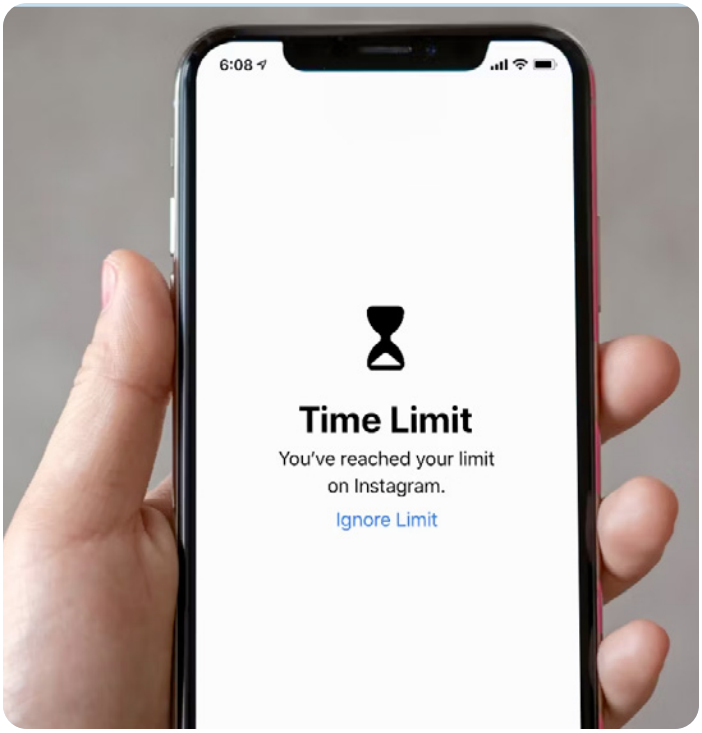
If you use screens during the evening, either for work or to wind down, try using blue light blocking glasses. These types of glasses are designed to block out most of the blue light that comes from screens, reducing the impact that they have on your sleep.

Use device limits

If you find yourself scrolling aimlessly or otherwise using screens at night, try using some of the limit functions. Depending on the device, there are ways to set usage limits on certain apps or devices so you can't use them either during certain hours or more than a specific amount of time each day.

Swap out the screen for something else

If you regularly use electronics to unwind in the evening, consider replacing part of that time with another activity. Journaling, reading, meditation, and yoga are all examples of relaxing activities you can do before bed that don't involve the use of electronics. You don't need to stop using screens entirely, but replacing even just the last 30 minutes to an hour of screen time can have an impact.



What you need to know

- Artificial blue light from electronics and screens can mimic natural blue light from the sun, keeping us awake longer and having a negative effect on our sleep
- Avoid screens for at least an hour before bed to limit your exposure to blue light
- Keep your phone and other screens out of the bedroom
- Blue light blocking glasses can help limit blue light exposure
- Device and app limits can help prevent you from scrolling too late in the evening
- Replacing screen time with other activities like reading or journaling can help cut down on blue light exposure

Building a better sleep system

Sleep system is a term that we like to use to describe the whole of your environment where you sleep. Basically, your sleep system refers to how your mattress, pillow, bedding, and overall bedroom environment come together to support your sleep. Having a calm, relaxing, dark environment to sleep in goes a long way towards getting better sleep. Changing your sleep system can have more immediate effects than building habits, since you're directly changing your sleep environment.

Our tips for creating a sleep-friendly environment might seem like a lot at first, but they are doable. We recommend you start by identifying which tips will be easiest for you to follow and which ones will have the biggest impact on your sleep personally. Work these tips into your life in chunks so you don't get overwhelmed trying to do too many at once. Once a tip has become a regular part of your life or routine, move on to another tip.

Mattresses

Your mattress is one of the most essential parts of your sleep system. Mattresses make or break a good night's sleep for many people, so you want to make sure your bed is setting you up with the right balance of comfort and support to meet your unique needs.

Generally speaking, mattresses are split into two major parts:

	Comfort layers	Support core
Where is it?	The upper layers of the mattress	The bottom or main base of the bed
Function	Cushion the body and prevent soreness and pressure on the body	Provides pushback to support the body and help keep your spine aligned
Common materials	Polyfoam, memory foam, latex, wool	Coils, dense foam, dense latex

Mattress firmness and what you need

The sturdiness of the support core combines with the cushion of the comfort layers to determine a bed's firmness. We rate beds on a 10-point scale and find that most people sleep well on a bed in the 4 (medium soft) to 6 (medium firm) range. Everyone has different needs from their bed, so there's no perfect one-firmness-fits-all mattress out there. That's why it's important to know what your needs are to make sure your mattress is comfortable enough to give you the sleep you need. The two main factors that go into your firmness needs are your sleep position and body weight.

Sleep position and mattress firmness

- **Side sleepers** tend to prefer softer beds with a good amount of cushioning for the hips and shoulders
- **Back sleepers** need a bit more support and a bit less cushioning than side sleepers, usually going for beds that are in the medium to medium firm range
- **Stomach sleepers** tend to need the strongest support, so they usually do well with firmer beds

Body weight and mattress firmness

- Generally speaking, the heavier you are, the deeper you'll sink into a bed
- **Heavier sleepers** tend to prefer firmer beds that provide plenty of support
- **Lighter sleepers** tend to go for softer models with plenty of cushioning



Types of mattresses

Three of the most common mattress types you'll see on the market are foam, latex, and hybrid beds.

	 Foam mattresses	 Hybrid mattresses	 Latex mattresses
What are they?	Foam mattresses are made by layering foam comfort layers on a foam support core	Hybrids have strong coil support cores with a variety of different comfort layers	Latex beds are made by layering latex comfort layers on a latex core
Why are they great?	Foam beds provide strong cushioning and they absorb motion, so they're popular with couples	Hybrids combine strong support with cushioning from comfort layers, often providing the best of both worlds	Latex beds have strong performance all around, with good support, good cushioning, and durable, breathable designs
What's the catch?	Foam beds tend to hold onto body heat and they usually have the weakest support cores	Hybrids vary so much that you may have to dig around to find your perfect match	Latex beds are heavy, hard to move, and are often some of the priciest models out there
How expensive are they?	Foam beds tend to be the least expensive bed type, but some fancier models made with memory foam can be expensive **Typical price range** $250-$1,200+	Hybrids have the widest variety of price ranges, but they tend to be firmly in the middle compared to other mattress types **Typical price range** $1,000-$3,000+	There's some variety in terms of pricing for latex beds, but they tend to be some of the most expensive beds on the market **Typical price range** $1,000-$2,500+

Use sleep trials

Look into brands that provide a risk-free sleep trial, which allows you to try their mattress in your home for multiple nights before deciding if you want to keep it. It usually takes a few weeks of sleep for a person to adjust to a mattress and decide if it fits their needs. Sleep trials make that possible and allow for free returns when a mattress isn't a match. Most mattress brands on the market offer sleep trials that give you at least a few months to try out a bed.

Save money with a mattress topper

If your mattress is not a good match for your body, a mattress topper can make your existing mattress feel softer or firmer, depending on the topper's material, thickness, and performance. Mattress toppers cost much less than new mattresses and have the ability to change the feel of a mattress temporarily, until you are able to get a new bed. Toppers aren't a permanent solution, but they can buy you plenty more time with your current mattress.

What you need to know

- Mattresses are made of comfort layers stacked onto a support core
- The right mattress firmness for you depends on your body weight and your preferred sleeping position
  - Heavier sleepers tend to prefer firmer beds, while lighter sleepers tend to prefer softer beds
  - Side sleepers tend to go for softer beds, back sleepers medium to firm, and stomach sleepers prefer firmer beds
- Sleep trials give you plenty of time to try out a mattress to see if it's right for you
- Three of the most popular mattress types are:
  - Foam beds that conform closely to the body and are great for pressure relief
  - Latex beds that have strong performance all around with a floaty, usually firmer feel
  - Hybrid beds that combine a coil support core with foam or latex layers up top, offering a good balance of support and cushioning
- If your mattress isn't working for you, but you're not ready for a new one, try using a mattress topper to change the feel of your bed

Pillows

Your pillow is one of the next most important parts of your sleep system. As with mattresses, there is no single pillow that's going to be the best match for everyone. Finding the right pillow is a matter of identifying what your needs are from a pillow, and learning what you need to look for in a pillow.

The main things you'll want to look for in a pillow are:

- What the pillow is made of (materials)
- How thick the pillow is (loft)
- How soft or firm the pillow feels (firmness)

Types of pillows

There are tons of different pillows on the market these days, made out of a wide variety of materials. When we talk about different types of pillows, we're usually referring to the pillow fill, or the material that makes up the pillow's core. Pillow fill materials play a major role in a pillow's feel and performance.

Here's a quick breakdown of common fills:

If you like...	Then try...
Cushier pillows that cradle the head and neck	Shredded memory foam, shredded latex, down and feathers, down alternative fibers
Firmer pillows with some light cushioning	Solid foam, solid latex
The firmest pillows with maximum support	Buckwheat hulls

Pillow cover materials aren't as important as fills, but they do have an impact. Your pillow's cover will mainly affect how cool it sleeps at night. If you sleep hot at night, consider going for a pillow with a cover made of cotton, bamboo-derived fabric, Tencel, or silk. If you have sensitive skin or want to minimize lines and wrinkles, we recommend a cover made of smooth materials like cotton sateen or silk. Most people use pillowcases with their pillows, so the cover material tends to matter much less than what your pillowcases are made of.

Pillow loft and what you need

The thickness of the pillow, or loft, is deeply tied to your sleeping position. Here's a quick breakdown of pillow loft recommendations:

	Side sleepers	Back sleepers	Stomach sleepers
What pillow loft do you need?	High loft (4-5+ inches thick)	Medium loft (2-5 inches thick)	Low loft (Under 2 inches thick)

In other words:

- Side sleepers need to fill the gap between their mattress and their head when they sleep, so they need a thicker pillow to make sure their necks are properly aligned
- Back sleepers need a pillow that's thick enough to provide support for the head, but not too thick, otherwise their heads get pushed into an awkward angle
- Stomach sleepers need the thinnest pillows – or no pillow at all – to keep their heads from being pushed too far upward, which can cause next-day aches and pains



Pillow firmness and what you need

What you need in terms of pillow firmness is mostly based on body weight and sleeping position. Generally speaking, heavier sleepers tend to need firmer pillows to provide plenty of support, while lighter sleepers tend to go for softer pillows. When it comes to sleeping position, side sleepers need a little more firmness to make sure their heads are well supported, while back and stomach sleepers can go for something softer.

Try an adjustable pillow

If you're not sure what kind of pillow loft or firmness is right for you, adjustable pillows are a great option. Adjustable pillows are designed so you can add or remove fill from the pillow to change the pillow's thickness and feel. Since adjustable pillows usually have a shredded fill, they tend to provide a bit less support unless they're really stuffed, but most people are able to find a setup that works for them.

What you need to know

- Pillows are sorted into types based on their fill
- Your needs for pillow loft or thickness are tied to your sleeping position
    - Side sleepers prefer high loft pillows, back sleepers go for medium loft, and stomach sleepers like low loft
- Adjustable pillows are a great option for most sleepers, since you can change their firmness and feel to meet your needs
- Pillow firmness depends on your sleeping position and body weight
    - Side sleepers need something a bit firmer for head support, back sleepers need a somewhat softer pillow, and stomach sleepers need soft pillows
    - Heavier sleepers tend to need firmer pillows for better support, while lighter sleepers tend to need softer pillows

Temperature

Temperature is a critical part of your sleep system. If you're too warm or too cold at night, it can interfere with the normal progression of your sleep cycle and make it harder to get quality sleep. Sleeping in a cool bedroom at the right temperature may help you fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer.

Quick tips to keep your bedroom cool in the heat

- Use air conditioning, if you can, to control the temperature
- Turn on a ceiling fan, window box fan, or small table-top fan
- After the sun has set and it has cooled off a little outside, open the windows for ventilation
- Keep curtains and blinds closed during the day to block the sun's heat
- Swap heavy bedding with lightweight sheets, blankets, and comforters
- Switch to lightweight, breathable pajamas
- Since heat rises, sleep on a lower level of the home, if possible
- Take a warm bath before bedtime to start your body's bedtime cooldown



Keep your bedroom between 60 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit (15.6 to 21.1 degrees Celsius)

Your core body temperature naturally lowers as it winds down for sleep, so it's best to make sure your sleeping environment matches that. Some people prefer to sleep hotter or colder than this range, so it's best to track your bedroom's temperature and whether it feels like the room's temperature is making it hard for you to fall or stay asleep. If you're not sure what temperature works best for you, 65°F is a great place to start.

Babies sleep best around 69 degrees Fahrenheit (20.5 degrees Celsius)

If you share a room with a baby, you may need to adjust to a warmer bedroom until they grow older. Sleeping in a warmer environment may not work for everyone, but the trade-off is worth it. An infant with disrupted sleep is more likely to interrupt your sleep than a higher bedroom temperature.

Try out a cooling system

If you're looking to invest in a high-tech solution, there are fitted mattress covers that allow you to control the temperature of your bed. Many of these covers work by pumping water through tubes along the surface of the bed. You can set the temperature of the water as warm or cold as you like within range, giving you direct control over your bed's surface temperature.

What you need to know

- Most people sleep best in a room that's between 60 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit
- Individual preferences vary, so adjust the temperature to meet your needs
- Babies sleep best around 69 degrees Fahrenheit
- Cooling water systems allow you to have direct control over the temperature of your bed's surface

Room darkness

A dark room at night can make it much easier to fall asleep. Even exposure to something as dim as a nightlight might get in the way of your sleep. Keeping your bedroom dark while you sleep can be a bit of a challenge, depending on where you live. You may need to block out external light sources like street lights or sunshine, or your room might have bright lights, electronics, or other sources of artificial blue light in it.

Manage your electronics

Like we've discussed already, electronics can be a mixed bag. Using your phone, TV, or computer can be a great way to relax and unwind before bed. That being said, if you're using them too close to bed, the artificial blue light that they give off can interfere with your sleep and keep you awake longer. Do what you can to reduce your blue light exposure by setting healthy limits on screen time before bed.



Shoot for an hour of screen-free time before bed to start and move from there.

Try blackout curtains

Regular curtains are useful for blocking light, but they aren't typically built to shut out all light. Blackout curtains are made to block out more light than usual, with some designed to block up to 99% of outside light. Blackout curtains typically cost more than regular curtains, but there are plenty of reasonably priced options in different styles.

Blackout curtains are a great move if:

- You need to sleep or nap during the day
- You live in a brightly lit area with street lights or other light pollution
- You have problems with the sun keeping you up or waking you too early in the morning

Try an eye mask

Eye masks are a quick and easy way to block out light without having to buy a whole set of blackout curtains. Whether you're bothered by a streetlight or early morning sun, an eye mask is a solid solution for a medium amount of light. If you sleep during the day, an eye mask may not be able to do as much about strong midday sun, but it'll cover a lot of bases when it comes to blocking out light.



What you need to know

- Keeping your bedroom dark at night is important for falling and staying asleep
- Keep screens out of the bedroom and aim to turn off the TV and put your phone away at least an hour before bedtime
- Blackout curtains are great for blocking out sunlight and street lights
- Eye masks are a quick and easy way to block out some light for better sleep

Bedding

The bedding you sleep in and the clothing you wear to bed can affect how well you sleep. You'll want everything you sleep in to feel right on your skin and keep you at a comfortable temperature through the night.

Choose fabrics for your climate

Bedding made from breathable, natural materials like cotton and linen and lighter blankets will help let out body heat when it's hot out, while flannel sheets, polyester bedding, and heavier blankets will lock body heat in when it's cold. If you live somewhere with major temperature changes across seasons, it might make sense for you to have at least two sets of bedding and sleepwear — for warmer and cooler months.

Know your weaves

The weave of a fabric directly affects how it feels and performs. The most common weaves used in sheets are percale and sateen. Percale sheets have a crisp quality and feel like a soft dress shirt, while sateen sheets are silkier and smoother with a slight sheen. Some sleepers find percale sheets run slightly cooler, while sateen sheets drape closely to the body and may trap a little bit more heat.

Look for thread count ranges

You may have heard that higher thread counts mean higher quality, but this is not necessarily the case. What you really want is to be in the right thread count range for your type of sheets. We recommend using cotton sheets that have somewhere around a 200 to 400 thread count and bamboo-derived sheets with a 300 to 500 thread count. That said, sheets with a 400 thread



count aren't always better than sheets with a 200 thread count, so be sure to give them a feel to make sure they're right for you.

Here is a quick breakdown of thread count ranges you should look for with different types of sheets:

Sheet type	Thread count range
Cotton sheets	200-400
Egyptian cotton	300-400
Percale sheets	200-400
Sateen sheets	300-600
Bamboo-derived fabrics	300-500
Linen sheets	80-140 (thread count is less useful for linen sheets, so it's rarely listed)

If a set of sheets has a really high thread count, then you should steer clear. There are a few tricks that sheet manufacturers can use to artificially boost their thread counts, so a 1,200 thread count set of sheets is probably not what it seems to be.

Sleep in comfortable materials

Choose pajamas that feel soft and comfortable on your skin and are not too tight or too loose. For bedding, use sheets, blankets, and a comforter or quilt that you enjoy touching and that keeps you warm enough through the night. Wearing what feels comfortable to you is most important.

What you need to know

- It's important to sleep in bedding that feels right on your skin and keeps you at a comfortable temperature through the night
- Bedding made from breathable natural materials like cotton and linen are good for hot sleepers, while flannel sheets and polyester bedding are better when it's cold
- Look for sheets that have thread counts in the right thread count range for the material
  - A higher thread count does not necessarily mean better quality
  - Cotton sheets should typically be somewhere around a 200 to 400 thread count
  - Avoid sheets that have suspiciously high thread counts

Children and pets

Sharing the bed with children and pets can make it harder to get good quality sleep. If you have young children, chances are they've asked to join you in bed on at least one occasion because they've had a bad dream or they can't sleep. While this can be fine every once in a while, consistent nighttime interruptions by your children can get in the way of both your sleep and their sleep.

Set your kids up with a good bedtime routine

Once children are sleeping in their own toddler beds, they're usually ready to start building a simple bedtime routine to help them wind down.



Set up a simple, consistent pattern of activities that you repeat with your child every night to let them know it's time to go to bed.

Here's a quick list of ideas for a bedtime routine:

- A relaxing bath
- Brushing their teeth
- Using the bathroom close to bedtime
- Story time with you reading to them in bed
- Cuddling in bed before they're tucked in for the night

Set boundaries with your kids, and be patient

If you're trying to get your kids to sleep in their own beds at night, set clear expectations with them. Let your children know that they shouldn't leave their room once the lights are out unless there's an emergency. If they do, calmly escort them back to bed.

There might be a learning curve with the new bedtime routine, so give them some time to adjust. Consistency and patience are key. If your child has a really bad night and needs to sleep with you, that's fine — just make sure it's every once in a while and not a nightly thing.

Try not to sleep with pets

When it comes to pets, we recommend you don't sleep with your pet so they don't interrupt your sleep. You may need to invest in a pet bed to give them a comfortable, specific place to sleep.

Getting your pet to learn that their pet bed is their spot to sleep can be tricky, here are a few quick tips:

Dogs

- Dogs respond well to clear direction and positive reinforcement
- Use treats, encouragement, and consistency to help your dog learn
- Play with and walk your dog during the day to make sure they're tired by bedtime
- Put your dog's favorite toys in the bed to help it feel like their spot

Cats

- Cats respond well to gentle, less direct tactics, but treats can help
- Cats love heights, warmth, and feeling comfortable when they sleep
- Make it harder for your cat to nap in your bed — try fragrances, keep cats out of the bedroom
- Tire your cat out with playtime before bed

What you need to know

- Sharing your bed with children and pets can interfere with your sleep quality
- Establishing a good bedtime routine for your children can help them fall asleep and stay asleep in their beds
- Set strong boundaries around sharing your bed with your children, and be patient with your kids
- Set up other spaces for your pets to sleep so they're not sharing a bed with you

Noise

Exposure to nighttime noise can disrupt sleep. Nighttime noise might come from people you share a living space with or from outside of your home. Nearby cars, trains, and airplanes are common sources of sound during the night. In urban areas, neighbors and pedestrians can contribute to disruptive noise. Even if you don't remember waking up, hearing noise as you sleep can still have some negative effects.

Quick tips to block out nighttime noise

- Use a soothing background sound to drown out other noises, like a fan, sleep app, or white noise machine
- Wear earplugs to reduce your exposure to noise if you live in a loud environment
- Look into sound-reducing windows and doors — some local programs may also provide assistance for people who live by airports or other loud areas
- Try to seal gaps or cracks in doors and windows where noise sneaks in using towels or old t-shirts
- If you've recently moved in somewhere, you may need to adjust to some new noises over time





Talk with your bed partner

If your bed partner makes noise that wakes you up at night, have a conversation with them to problem-solve the issue. Sometimes, people choose to sleep separately to avoid sleep disruption. If the person you share a bed with snores or gasps for breath while asleep, they may need to see a doctor.

Set up quiet hours

If you live with others and have different schedules, it may help to set up some times of day where you all agree to be mindful of how much noise you make. Setting up quiet times when people are typically asleep can go a long way to cutting out accidental noise keeping you up at night.

What you need to know

- Nighttime noise can affect your sleep, even if it doesn't wake you up
- Talk to the people you live with to agree on boundaries for noise and quiet hours if needed
- Try background noises, earplugs, and blocking outside noise as best as you can

Humidity

Humidity might not be the first thing that comes to mind when you think of sleep, but it does have an impact. Tracking your home's humidity and keeping it in the right range will help prevent the presence of mold and creepy crawlies that can disturb your sleep.

Keep indoor relative humidity between 30% and 50%

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the ideal indoor relative humidity level falls between 30% and 50%. No home should have a humidity level of over 60%, at the very highest. When your home's indoor humidity gets too high, there's a risk of mold growing.

The presence of mold can increase the severity of a person's allergies or even prompt an allergic-like response in people who don't have allergies. These symptoms might interfere with sleep. Indoor mold is correlated with an increased number of sleep disturbances, as well as snoring, insomnia, and daytime sleepiness.

Along with helping prevent mold, low humidity levels may also discourage pests, like cockroaches, and reduce the presence of dust mites, both of which can also cause allergic-like reactions that may disrupt sleep.

Track and adjust your home's humidity

Many homes have humidity monitors built into their furnaces. Some monitors even allow a person to adjust the humidity of their home. People who live in spaces without a built-in humidity monitor can usually find a low-cost humidity sensor online for around $10 to $20. If you find your bedroom humidity level falls outside of the recommended range, you can adjust it by using a portable humidifier or dehumidifier.

What you need to know

- Keep your indoor relative humidity between 30% and 50% to help prevent mold and pests
- Use humidity monitors, humidifiers, and dehumidifiers to keep your bedroom in the recommended range

Allergens

People who experience allergies tend to take longer to fall asleep and are more likely to wake up at night. As a result, people with allergies are also more likely to experience morning headaches and daytime fatigue. Buildup of allergens — particles like pollen, pet dander, and dust — can trigger your allergy symptoms. Reducing allergens in the bedroom can help you get the sleep you need.

Avoid bringing in outdoor allergens

If seasonal allergies are the problem, keep your home's doors and windows closed as much as possible, so grass and tree pollen can't waft in. If allergy symptoms continue to keep you up at night, there are a few more things you can do to keep allergens out. Change into fresh clothes right when you get home after going outside, and shower before bed to wash allergens away.

Take your allergy medication before sleep if all else fails, but be sure to discuss any medication changes with your doctor first.

Keep your bedroom clear of allergens

Don't allow your pets into your bedroom during the day, and have them sleep in a different space at night. This way, you won't be exposed to their hair and dander as you sleep. Regularly dust and vacuum your bedroom to avoid dust mite exposure. Investing in an air purifier can help remove a variety of allergens from the air in your sleeping environment.

Cleaning your bedding regularly, about once a week, can keep your sheets from holding on to allergens. Consider deep cleaning or removing any wall-to-wall carpeting or thick rugs as well, since both can hold on to allergens.

What you need to know

- Allergies can interfere with sleep, so reducing allergens in the bedroom
- Keep doors and windows closed and shower before bed to help keep seasonal allergens out
- Regularly clean your bedding and sleep space to remove allergens

Smell

Aromatherapy helps some people improve their sleep using scents. You can use a variety of different smells to make falling asleep and waking up easier.

Use scents to fall asleep

The scents of certain essential oils, such as lavender, rose, and chamomile, have been found to help with sleep. You might use essential oils by sniffing them directly, spraying them in the air in your bedroom, or diluting them with a carrier oil and applying them to your skin.

Some companies make essential oil products specifically designed to help with sleep, like pillow sprays.

Use scents to wake up

Certain scents can help you feel more awake in the morning. Breathing in the smell of coffee can increase alertness. Certain essential oils, like peppermint and rosemary, can also help increase alertness.

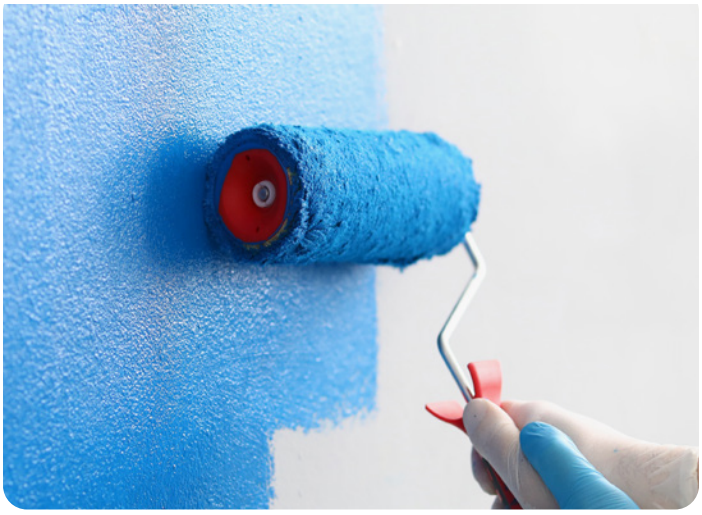


What you need to know

- Certain scents can make it easier to fall asleep or feel more alert
- The smells of lavender, rose, and chamomile, have all been found to help with sleep
- The smells of coffee, peppermint, and rosemary can all help you feel more awake

Room layout

Your interior decorating choices can impact how well you sleep at night. Exciting colors and clutter may get in the way of your sleep.



Stick with cool wall colors

When painting your bedroom walls or selecting a comforter, try to choose cool colors, like gray or blue. Cool colors tend to be calming, while bright colors, like red, excite the brain and body. Being surrounded by a color like red can even affect your mood and heart rate.

Stick-on wallpapers are a quicker way to change your walls than repainting. If you can't change the color of your sleeping space, try to only spend time there when it's dark.

Declutter your space

Clutter can subtly contribute to stress, potentially interfering with your sleep. If your bedroom's too disorganized, your messy surroundings might increase anxious feelings that can make it harder to relax your mind when you're trying to fall asleep.

You don't have to go overboard and put everything away. Spending just a few minutes each day picking up clutter can help keep it from building up and feeling overwhelming to deal with. If you find you need a certain amount of clutter to feel cozy, you can try seeing what feels comforting to have out and put away the rest.

What you need to know

- Design your sleep space with calming, relaxing colors, textures, and imagery to help you sleep
- Keep your sleep space relatively clear of clutter, so it feels cozy and not messy

Building better sleep routines

Going to sleep at the same time every night can make it easier to fall asleep. Building a bedtime routine is an easy way to help yourself stick with a consistent bedtime and wind your body down for sleep.

We'll walk you through everything you need to know when it comes to figuring out how much sleep you need and setting a bedtime for yourself. Then, we'll share a number of ideas and quick tips for some relaxing activities that you can build into wake up and bedtime routines.

The more you stick to a sleep routine, the easier it will be to do your sleep routine in the future. Habits don't build in a day, so don't be discouraged if you fall off track or it takes a while to do your routine consistently. Keep trying and do the steps of your routine when you can and keep going until it sinks in.

Don't feel like you have to do everything at once. Try to start small with three steps in your routine first, then add more over time as you get used to them.

Setting a consistent bedtime and wake time

Setting a consistent bedtime and wake time — even on the weekends — can help you make sure you get the amount of sleep you need.

How much sleep do I need?

Adults typically need at least seven hours of sleep a night, but everyone's sleep needs are different, so it's possible for someone to need eight or nine hours of sleep instead. If you're not sure how much sleep you need, try tracking how many hours you sleep each night for at least a week, and note how much sleep it takes for you to consistently wake up feeling rested.

How do I set my bedtime?

You can calculate your best bedtime by taking the amount of sleep you want to get and working backwards from the time you need to wake up.

Once you know your target wake time, use our sleep cycle calculator's formula to get started.

1. The average sleep cycle is 90 minutes long
2. A typical night of sleep includes 5 full sleep cycles
3. 90 x 5 = 450 minutes, or 7.5 hours
4. Starting with your wake time, work back 7.5 hours to find your bedtime

Be sure to add in a bit of extra time to account for the time it takes you to fall asleep and nighttime awakenings. People often sleep for slightly less than they think they do, because of nighttime awakenings they don't remember, or because they're using sleep trackers that overestimate their sleep time.

Let's say you regularly need to wake up by 7 a.m. Working back 7.5 hours from 7 a.m. gives you a bedtime of 11:30 p.m. That means you should be in bed and ready to fall asleep at 11:30 p.m. With that in mind, you might want to make your "lights out" time 11 p.m. or 10:30 p.m. to give you plenty of time to fall asleep, and to provide

some extra time in case you wake up in the middle of the night.

Your goal should be to wake up naturally about 5 to 10 minutes ahead of your alarm. If you find yourself waking up well before your alarm, or you're sleeping up to your alarm, then you'll want to try moving your bedtime 15 minutes at a time until you find your personal sweet spot.

Should I sleep at the same time every night?

It's best to set sleep and wake times that you can stick to every day, even on days off, weekends, and vacation. There's some room for flexibility here, but try to stay within half an hour to an hour of your set bedtime each night.

If you can't stick to the same times every day, try to keep your bedtime and wake times as consistent as you can for as many days of the week as you can. Giving your body a rough pattern of when it can expect to sleep is a step in the right direction. Try setting a reminder for when you need to start winding down for the night to get you in the right mindset for sleep.

What you need to know

- Setting a consistent bedtime and wake up time and sticking to it every day, even on weekends and holidays, can make it easier to fall asleep
- Adults typically need at least 7 hours of sleep a night, but everyone's sleep needs are different and some people need more hours
- To set your bedtime, work backward from the time you need to be awake.
- Identify how many hours of sleep you need to feel refreshed and count backward from your wake up time by that many hours
- If you need 8 hours of sleep and you wake up at 7 a.m., then you should fall asleep by 11 p.m. at the latest
- Push your bedtime back a little further to give yourself extra time to fall asleep
- If you need to fall asleep by 11 p.m., then giving yourself a "lights out" time of 10 or 10:30 gives you a good window to wind down for bed

Wake-up routines

When you get up in the morning, there are plenty of things you can do to help yourself wake up naturally and shake off grogginess. Setting yourself up for success with a morning routine can help you feel refreshed and ready to take on the day. We've already discussed a bunch of tips for waking up effectively earlier in this guidebook, and we've used them to put together an example of what a wake-up routine might look like.

Example wake-up routine

Here's an example wake-up routine using the info from this guidebook:

1. Start by waking up at your normal time — even if it's the weekend or a holiday
2. Get 15 minutes of natural sunlight
3. Get some morning exercise
4. Shower using cold water
5. Wait 90 minutes after you wake up to have any coffee or caffeine



Bedtime routines

We've also prepared an example of what a bedtime routine might look like, along with plenty of tips and options that you might try working into your own routine.

Example bedtime routine

Here's an example bedtime routine using the info from this guidebook:

1. Stop eating and drinking alcohol around 3 hours before bed (water is fine until about 1 hour before bed)
2. Dim the lights and start limiting light exposure around 2 hours before bed
3. Choose a relaxing, lower energy activity like reading
4. Try journaling about your day or making a to-do list for tomorrow to get your thoughts out before bed
5. Take a warm shower and start on your pre-bed routine within 1 hour of bedtime
6. Brush your teeth, wash your face, and do other light pre-bed activities
7. Around 20-30 minutes before bed, change into pajamas and do some light stretching, yoga, or guided meditation
8. Leave your phone and other electronic devices in another room if you can

Avoid electronics before bed

Smartphones, computers, and other digital devices emit blue light that can interfere with your sleep. Blue light exposure suppresses the production of melatonin, a sleep-promoting hormone, in the brain. Avoid using digital devices as much as you can when you're trying to wind down for bed.

Try putting your devices in another room or a less visible space before you start your bedtime routine every night. Keeping your devices out of sight will help you be less tempted to check them. If you need a good rule of thumb to start with, try to avoid using electronics for at least an hour before bed.

Try light stretches, yoga, or meditation

Yoga that helps you sleep should not be intense exercise, but instead, a gentle practice similar to meditation through movement. If you're practicing yoga as part of a nightly routine, consider doing a few slow, gentle poses or stretches as a part of your routine rather than following along with an hour-long video. Or, if you

prefer, practice deep breathing silently or while listening to a guided meditation after you're already in bed.

Write a to-do list or start journaling

Worrying can keep you up at night, so try doing some writing before bedtime that helps ease your worries. Journaling and making to-do lists for the next day are both great ways to tackle your worries. Journaling about worries is relaxing for some people, helping them fall asleep faster. Writing a very specific to-do list and planning out how you will approach the next day has also been shown to help people fall asleep. The more detailed your to-do list, the faster you might fall asleep. The main point here is to get your thoughts out on paper before you go to bed so they're not running through your mind when you're trying to sleep.

Read a book

Reading before bed is a relaxing activity that has been connected to better sleep quality. Make sure you read something that's pleasant or even boring — getting wrapped up in a page-turning story can end up keeping you awake and reading instead of sleeping. The big thing here is to make sure you're only reading actual printed books before bed. Phones, laptops, e-readers, and other digital devices emit light that suppresses melatonin, the sleep hormone.

Take a warm bath (or shower) before bed

Taking a warm bath or shower before bed can help you fall asleep faster. If you already shower at night, try working it into your bedtime routine. Showers easily flow into calming pre-bed activities like brushing your teeth or practicing your skincare routine. One thought as to why warm showers help you sleep is that warm water warms the skin, drawing blood flow to your hands and feet and lowering your core body temperature. Your core body temperature naturally drops as your body winds down for sleep, so taking a warm shower might help kick start that process.



Drink herbal tea

Try sipping a mug of hot, herbal tea in the evening as you wind down with a soothing pre-bed activity, like reading a book. Herbal teas are made from dried herbs instead of tea leaves, so they don't usually contain caffeine and won't keep you up at night. Certain types of herbal tea, like chamomile tea and passionflower tea, have been found to improve sleep quality, reduce stress, and reduce mood issues.

Stay out of bed unless you're sleeping

Try only using your bed for two activities: sleep and sex. Using your bed solely for sleep helps your brain associate being in bed with falling asleep. When you check email, read news, watch television, or browse social media from bed, you are no longer viewing your bed as a relaxing space intended for rest. Devices with screens like smartphones, televisions, and eReaders also expose you to sleep-disrupting blue light, so it's best to keep them out of the bedroom

What you need to know

- Avoid electronics before bed to reduce exposure to blue light, and pick nighttime activities to wind down that don't involve screens
- Light stretches, yoga, and meditation are all gentle, relaxing ways to wind down before bed
- Write a to-do list for tomorrow or start journaling to get your thoughts out on paper before you go to bed, so you can clear your mind before trying to sleep
- Reading a printed book before bed is an easy way to relax and avoid electronics
- Taking a warm bath or shower before bed can help you fall asleep faster
- Herbal teas are a way to enjoy a hot beverage before bed without drinking caffeine, and some herbal teas have been connected to sleep improvements
- Avoid using your bed for anything but sleep, so your mind associates being in bed with falling asleep

Naps

If you find that you're feeling tired or lacking energy during the day even though you're improving your nightly sleep, consider napping if you can. When done right, napping can improve thinking, memory, attention, and management of emotions.

Timing your naps

The right amount of time for a nap varies from person to person, but many people feel refreshed after resting anywhere from 5 to 25 minutes. The major cap you should set for a nap is to keep it shorter than 30 minutes — napping longer than 30 minutes can backfire, leaving you feeling groggy instead of refreshed when you wake up.

Try timing your nap with your "post-lunch dip," the period of time in the early afternoon where many people naturally feel tired. After lunch time, pay attention to and note what time you feel the most sluggish. Then, schedule some time moving forward to lie down for a short nap just before that wave of early afternoon sleepiness hits. Try to avoid napping right after a meal or too close to your usual bedtime.

Try a caffeine nap

For an added boost of energy, try a caffeine nap. A caffeine nap involves drinking coffee or another caffeinated drink just before you take a short nap. A caffeine nap can improve your attention and reduce tiredness more than a nap alone. Make sure you don't try this type of nap too late in the day, so you have plenty of time for the caffeine to work its way out of your body.

What you need to know

- Napping properly can help in many ways and give you a boost when you're feeling tired
- Keep your naps shorter than 30 minutes, as going over can leave you feeling groggy when you wake up
- Try to time your nap with your post-lunch dip to push through afternoon grogginess
- Avoid napping right after a meal or too close to your bedtime
- Try a caffeine nap — drink coffee or another caffeinated drink right before you take a short nap for an added boost

Guided meditation

When you meditate, you train yourself to respond to external and internal stimulation in a non-judgmental way. The aim is to become more aware of your present condition and inner thoughts. Observing your thoughts and feelings can help you become less reactive to stress and better able to tolerate uncomfortable emotions.

Researchers are still digging deeper to understand the effects of meditation more fully, but there's a lot of evidence to suggest that there are multiple sleep-related benefits to regular meditation practice.

- Meditation can boost sleep quality
- Regular practice can help you detach from your thoughts enough to fall asleep
- It can help with pain management for conditions like fibromyalgia, muscle aches, migraine, arthritis
- It can induce a relaxation response in the mind and body that can help you drift off
- It can lead to positive shifts in stress management, calmness, as well as informational and emotional processing



Given all the benefits associated with meditation, you might be interested in adding meditation to your bedtime routine. If you've never meditated before, it can be hard to know where to begin. There are many ways to meditate, so here are two of the most popular and well-studied methods to get you started:

- **Mindfulness meditation** involves focusing your energy on the present moment, rather than dwelling on the past or future
- **Body scan meditation** requires you to lie down as you focus your mind elsewhere. The idea is to focus on physical sensations throughout your body, relieving tension and drawing your mind away from anxieties and stressors

There are many guided meditation resources online that can help walk you through both of these meditation types until you've built the skills to tackle them on your own. As you get started with meditation, remember to be patient with yourself. Practicing it regularly can be great for your sleep health, but try to keep your expectations reasonable at first. You probably won't feel like an expert after the first night and that's totally fine. Meditation is a practice that can take time to learn. Stick with it and be kind to yourself along the way.

What you need to know

- Practicing different forms of meditation has been connected to improvements in sleep and other areas of life
- Two major and well-studied forms of meditation are mindfulness meditation and body scan meditation
- Guided meditation resources online can get you started by walking you through meditation exercises
- Meditation can be a slow practice that can take a while to develop and show results

Daily sleep checklist





Day

- ○ Woke up within 30 minutes of your regular wake up time
- ○ Got at least 15 minutes of sunlight in the morning
- ○ Drank a glass of cold water
- ○ Took a cold shower
- ○ Waited 90 minutes after waking up before having caffeine
- ○ Stopped drinking caffeine at least 8 hours before bed
- ○ Consumed less than 400 mg of caffeine
- ○ Exercised for at least 20 minutes

Night

- ○ Stopped eating at least 2 hours before bed
- ○ Stopped drinking alcohol at least 2 hours before bed
- ○ Started limiting bright light exposure around 2 hours before bed
- ○ Stopped screen time at least 1 hour before bed
- ○ Stopped drinking fluids 1 hour before bed
- ○ Did a relaxing activity without screens before bed, like reading, journaling, or stretching
- ○ Went to bed within 30 minutes of your regular bedtime
- ○ Put phone and other electronic devices away before bed

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