

Sleep

Better sleep for energy



The main purpose of sleep is to provide mental and physical restorative healing. Good quality sleep in the right amounts enhances your sense of alertness and improves both your mood and mental functioning. Without sleep we lack energy – sleep is what we require to recharge our batteries.

Tips to improve energy through better sleep:

Take a step back

Look at your diet, exercise patterns, sleeping environment, personal habits, lifestyle, and current concerns, and determine if any of these elements may be getting in the way of getting a good night's sleep. If not enough time for sleep is a problem, try re-evaluating your priorities.

Reduce caffeine and alcohol

Some people have trouble sleeping due to drinking caffeine and alcohol in the evening. Caffeine usually makes you alert whilst alcohol on the other hand, may help you to doze off initially, but your sleep may not be as restful as it could be.

Eat for sleep

Certain foods may cause heartburn that can keep you up in the middle of the night. Drinking a lot of fluids close to bedtime can wake you up as well with trips to the bathroom. Also, be careful of eating too much or not enough. Both can disrupt sleep by making you feel uncomfortable.

Create an ideal sleep environment

Make sure your mattress provides enough support. If noise is a problem, consider wearing ear plugs, playing relaxing music, or placing rugs, heavy curtains, or double-pane windows in your bedroom. Make sure the room is comfortable, dark, and cool.

Exercise at the right time

Studies show physical activity in the late afternoon can improve the quality of sleep, but working out 2 to 3 hours before bedtime may delay slumber.

Set a regular bedtime and wake-time schedule

Sleeping late or sleeping in may seem ideal on weekends, but it may give you trouble getting to bed on Sunday evening, or waking up on Monday morning.

Find time to relax before going to sleep

Bedtime rituals can help you unwind and encourage a more restful sleep. Different activities work for different people. Try gentle music, soaking in a warm bath, relaxation exercises or reading a book.

Plan your sleep sensibly

Make sure you spend eight hours in bed – so if your alarm is set to go off at 6.30, make sure you're in bed at 10.30.

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Better sleep for energy contd

Understanding and improving your sleep patterns

Most people's sleep can be improved by simple changes to your daily and night-time routines. These guidelines will show you what you can do to help yourself. Your doctor should be consulted if insomnia persists for more than a few weeks despite following a sensible routine.

How did you sleep and how did you feel when you woke up?

If you slept well and awoke feeling refreshed you are probably getting enough sleep, even if this is less than average. If you did not feel refreshed despite a long enough sleep, you may need some advice about improving the quality of your sleep.

Make sure you have a comfortable, supportive mattress and a pillow that supports your neck. If you disturb your partner's sleep with snoring as well, you need to see your doctor in case this is due to sleep apnoea. It can be treated. Keep monitoring your sleep with a diary so you can judge the effectiveness of different things and find what is best for you.

What time do you go to bed?

Do you go to bed at about the same time on most nights, and does this allow enough time for a good eight hours' rest before you have to get up?

It will help you to sleep well if you keep to a regular bedtime as much as possible. You can offset the occasional late night with sleeping in the next day or having a nap before going out, but an early night is actually more beneficial. Not allowing enough time to sleep means you will feel tired the next day and it could affect your health in the long-term. Try to get to bed early if you have to be up early.

Do you go to bed at a reasonable time but can't get to sleep?

Perhaps you need to look at what you do to relax before bed. You may be a natural 'owl', alert late in the evening and sleepy in the morning, but your body clock can be retrained to give an earlier onset of sleep. Start by going to bed a bit earlier, when feeling tired, and then retiring 15-to-30 minutes earlier each day until the desired time is reached.

Do you wake in the night?

If this is due to breathing problems, severe snoring, recurrent pain, or the frequent need to pass urine you need to see your doctor to check if you have any underlying medical problems. If you simply have trouble getting back to sleep, analyse what you are thinking about that keeps you awake.

If you find that you are regularly waking up in the early hours for no reason and then can't get back to sleep, this too may be worth discussing with your doctor. It may help to get some advice about managing stress and pressure so that worries do not disturb your sleep. If you suddenly wake thinking about things you need to do, keep a pad and pen by your bed to write them down. That way you won't forget them and you can relax and go back to sleep.

Avoid alcoholic nightcaps because these can lead to sleep disturbance as the sedative effect wears off. Heavy meals late at night will keep you awake, but on the other hand, going to bed hungry will not help either! If you have to eat late, make it a light, easily digestible meal.

Do you wake too early in the morning and then tire later in the day?

If you go to bed at the normal time but are waking early you are unlikely to be getting enough sleep. So go to bed earlier still. It is better to get up when you wake up and go to bed when tired. If external factors, such as noise or light are the cause of the early waking, try and deal with them to minimise their impact. Blinds or heavier curtains, or sleeping in a different room are possible ways of dealing with these issues.

If this is not practical, exposure to bright light in the afternoon and early evening will delay the onset of sleep, which should result in you waking later in the morning. If you wake early because you are worried about something, consider relaxation and/or seeking some pressure management advice. If it's a hungry, wet infant demanding early morning attention, try to get a nap to catch up on your rest later in the day.