

# Get Better Sleep Tonight

FIND OUT WHAT *RESTED* FEELS LIKE

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Guidelines For Better Sleep is an information sheet with guidelines for getting better sleep. It also includes tips for managing sleep disruption, such as nightmares. It was initially developed with PTSD patients in mind, but anyone with sleep disturbance should find this helpful.

Find out what *rested* feels like.

- *Bart*



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# 10 Reasons You Need Better Sleep

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A good night's sleep is vital to our physical health and emotional wellbeing. That's why the benefits of good sleep should never be underestimated and getting proper rest on a regular basis isn't just a good idea, it's an essential one.

## 10 Reasons Why a Better Sleep Means a Better You

- 1. Sleep helps reduce stress**  
If your body doesn't get enough sleep, it can react by producing an elevated level of stress hormones, which are a natural result of today's fast-paced lifestyles. Deep and regular sleep can help prevent this.
- 2. Sleep can improve your memory**  
Ever noticed that when you're really tired it's harder to remember things? Basically, this is your brain telling you that it's not getting enough sleep. When you sleep well, your body may be resting but your brain is busy organizing and storing memories. So getting more quality sleep will help you remember and process things better.
- 3. Sleep can lower your blood pressure**  
Higher blood pressure increases your chances of heart attacks and strokes but getting plenty of restful sleep encourages a constant state of relaxation that can help reduce blood pressure and generally keep it under control.
- 4. Sleep helps your body to fight back**  
While you're sleeping your body is producing extra protein molecules that can strengthen your ability to fight infections. If you're feeling a bit run down and don't want it to turn into a full-blown cold, go to bed early and get lots of rest.
- 5. Sleep can help you maintain your weight**  
Unfortunately, sleep won't directly make you lose weight, but it can help you keep it under control by regulating the hormones that affect your appetite and reducing your cravings for high calorie foods.

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### 6. **Sleep puts you in a better mood**

Lack of sleep can make us more agitated, so we're more likely to snap at our boss or be grumpy with a loved one – neither of which is a good thing. The better you sleep, the better your ability to stay calm, controlled and reasonable.

### 7. **Sleep could reduce your chances of diabetes**

Some research studies have shown that not getting enough sleep may lead to type 2 diabetes by affecting how your body processes glucose. It's not conclusive by any means, but it's yet another indication of how important the benefits of sleep can be.

### 8. **Sleep helps keep your heart healthy**

A regular sleep pattern can help to lower the levels of stress and inflammation to your cardiovascular system, which in turn can reduce your chances of a heart condition.

### 9. **Sleep can be a painkiller**

If you're suffering pain from a recent injury like a sprained ankle, getting plenty of sleep can make it hurt less. Many studies have shown a link between sleep loss and a lower pain threshold. Basically the more sleep you get, the less pain you might be in.

### 10. **Sleep can make you smarter.**

Along with a great night's sleep, grabbing a quick nap in the daytime can contribute towards making your brain more effective and productive. Cut the naps out, though if you're having difficulty getting to sleep at night. You won't necessarily be answering all the questions on your favorite game show, but you may well feel sharper, more attentive, and focused throughout the day.

Good sleep is critical to your health. To make each day a safe, productive one, take the following steps to make sure you regularly get a good night's sleep.



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# Guidelines for Better Sleep



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# Guidelines for Better Sleep

Sleeping well is a habit that you can learn! Small changes can have significant effects. Start today by following these guidelines:

## Take care of your body

- Do not drink caffeine: no tea, coffee, or soft drinks after 4 o'clock
- Do not eat a big or spicy meal late in the evening
- Do not go to bed hungry
- Avoid alcohol as it interferes with sleep

**Physical exercise**, such as a brisk walk, in the late afternoon, can help to make your body tired and help you to sleep. Try to do some exercise every day.

**Sleep only at night-time** if you trouble getting to sleep in the evening. Naps can keep the problem going by making it harder for you to get to sleep the next night.

**Having a regular bedtime routine** teaches your body when it's time to go to sleep.

- Have a soothing drink like chamomile tea or a milky drink
- Have a bath, or a routine of washing your face and brushing your teeth
- Go to bed at the same time each night
- Pray
- When in bed think of positive things (e.g., think of 5 nice things that happened that day – they might be big or small, such as a friendly conversation, seeing the sunshine, or hearing beautiful music on the radio)
- Do a relaxed breathing exercise (one hand on stomach the other on your chest, deliberately slow your breathing, breathe deeply in your stomach instead of high in your chest)

## Guidelines Continued

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- Evaluate your room. Design your sleep environment to establish the conditions you need for sleep. Your bedroom should be cool – between 60 and 67 degrees. Your bedroom should also be free from any noise that can disturb your sleep. Finally, your bedroom should be free from any light. Check your room for noises or other distractions. This includes a bed partner's sleep disruptions such as snoring. Consider using blackout curtains, eye shades, ear plugs, "white noise" machines, humidifiers, fans and other devices.
- Try and wake up the same time every day, even if this is tiring to begin with

**Coping with bad dreams can be difficult.** Some people don't like relaxation before going to sleep or are scared of letting go. If that is you, try these preparation techniques instead:

- Prepare yourself in the event you have bad dreams by thinking of a bad dream then think of a different ending for it. Practice this new ending many times before going to sleep.
- Before going to sleep, prepare to re-orient yourself when you wake from a bad dream.
- Remind yourself that you are at home, that you are safe. Imagine your street, buses, local shops.
- Put a damp towel or a bowl of water by the bed to splash your face, place a special object by the bed, such as a photograph, or a small soft toy.
- Practice imagining yourself waking up from a bad dream and reorienting yourself to the present, to safety by splashing your face, touching a special object, having a bottle of rose or lavender essential oil to sniff, going to window to see surroundings.
- When you wake up from a bad dream - move your body if you can and reorient yourself immediately (touching an object, wetting face, going to the window, reassuringly talk to yourself)

**Make your bedroom a pleasant place to be.**

- Keep it clean and tidy
- Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillows. Make sure your mattress is comfortable and supportive. The one you have been using for years may have exceeded its life expectancy – about 9 or 10 years for most good quality mattresses. Have comfortable pillows and make the room attractive and inviting for sleep but also free of allergens that might affect you and objects that might cause you to slip or fall if you have to get up during the night.

## Guidelines Continued

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- Introduce pleasant smells such as a drop of lavender oil onto the pillow
- Get extra pillows
- Make sure that your home is safe, e.g., doors locked; windows closed.

### **REMEMBER:** Bed is for sleeping

- If you cannot sleep after 30 minutes, get up and do another activity elsewhere such as reading or listening to music (try and avoid TV as it can wake you up). After 15 minutes, return to bed and try to sleep again. If you still can't sleep after 30 minutes, get back up.
- Repeat this routine as many times as necessary.
- It is best to take work materials, computers and televisions out of the sleeping environment. Use your bed only for sleep and sex to strengthen the association between bed and sleep. If you associate a particular activity or item with anxiety about sleeping, omit it from your bedtime routine.

**Continue to next page for your Checklist for Better Sleep**



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# Checklist for Better Sleep

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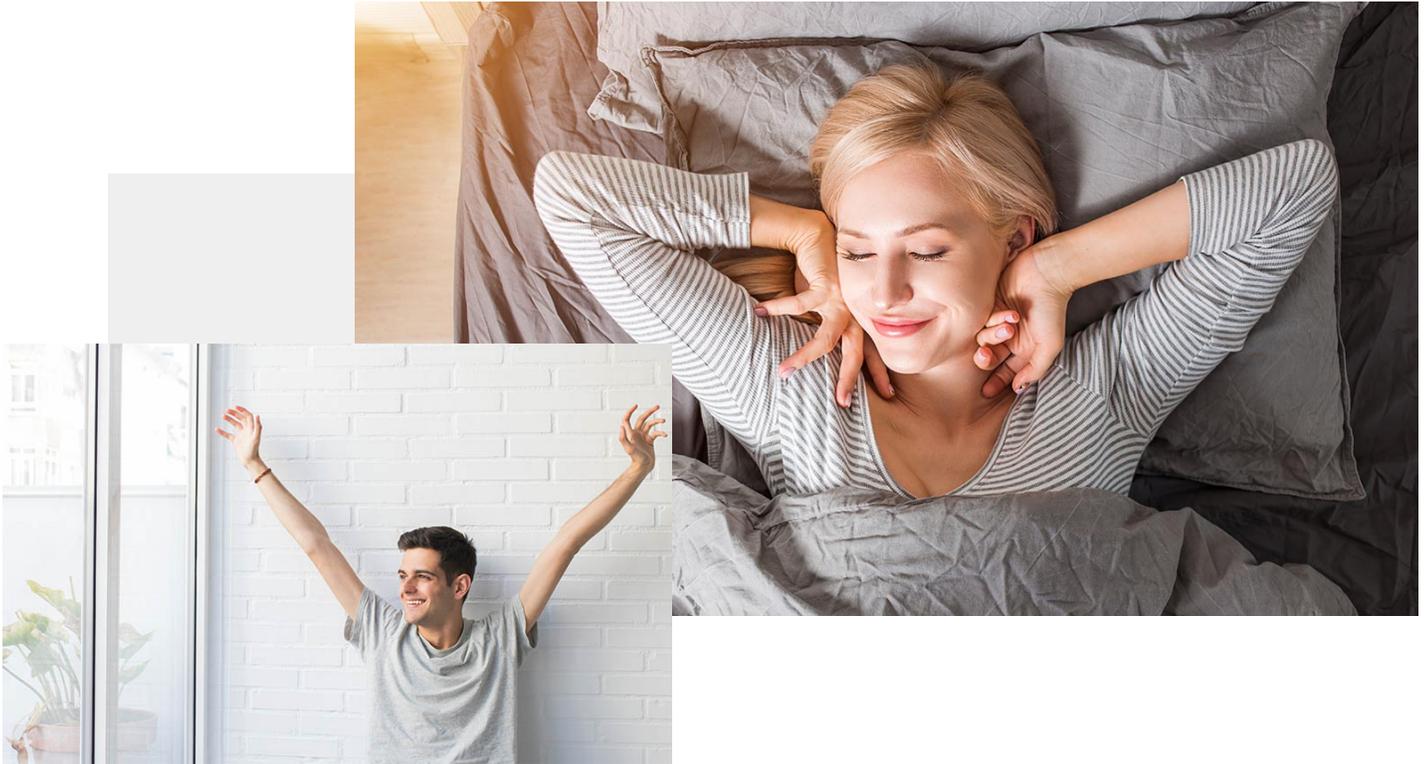
Many factors influence good sleep. Record how many of these things you have done in the last week and consider making changes to your routine.

## Things that are known to make sleep worse

- Napping during the day
- Watching television in bed
- Using a device with a bright screen in the hour before bedtime (e.g., a smartphone, a laptop)
- Consuming drinks containing caffeine (includes tea, coffee, cola, energy drinks, hot chocolate)
  - How many each day?
  - What time of the day was your last caffeinated drink? (try to avoid caffeine after 6 pm)
- Drinking alcohol (alcohol typically leads to interrupted sleep)
- Eating a heavy meal less than 3 hours before bedtime
- Staying in bed even if you can't fall asleep (it's better to get up and do something relaxing, then try again later)

## Things that are known to improve sleep

- Regular exercise
  - How many times a week? (it is recommended to do at least 3 x 30 minutes per week)
  - What time of the day? (it is best not to exercise in the 3-4 hours before bedtime)
- Setting aside some "worry time" each day to write down any issues that are bothering or concerning you, then deciding to leave those worries behind until tomorrow (make sure to do this at least one hour before bedtime)
- Relaxation exercises (e.g., relaxed breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation)
- Having a relaxing bedtime routine (e.g., taking a bath or a shower, reading a comforting book)
- Setting the conditions for sleep
  - Make sure the bedroom is completely dark (blackout curtains are cheap and effective)
  - Make sure the mattress and pillows are comfortable (make bed an attractive place to be!)
  - Make sure the bedroom is the right temperature (think like Goldilocks: not too hot, not too cold)



## Disclaimer

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