

SLEEP ADVICE

Sleeping Environment

- Get comfy. Make sure your bed and bedding are comfortable. Wear something comfortable to bed rather than tight or restricting “day clothes.”
- Keep it cool. Cool room temperatures promote sleep and minimize itchy sensations.
- Remove distractions. Get the TV out of the bedroom. Avoid watching or listening to upsetting, violent or intense materials within 2 hours of bedtime. That includes high-intensity dramas, the news, or conflict-filled talk shows.
- Make your mind associate your bed with sleep-time. Use the bed for sleeping, not for TV, homework, talking on the phone, surfing the web or playing electronic games.
- Soothing sounds. Try listening to relaxing music, sounds from nature, or “white noise” (like from a fan or a white noise machine). Keep the noise level down. Consider earplugs if you can’t control the environment.
- Darker is better. Turn the lights off. Darkness promotes sleep and healthy levels of melatonin, an important hormone that regulates sleep and wakefulness.
- Smell the roses, or better yet, lavender or chamomile. Soothing scents such as lavender have proven effective in helping people fall asleep, even in noisy intensive care units.
- Warm yourself up. A person warmed passively by a hot bath or sauna (not from intense exercise) falls asleep more quickly than someone who is cold. Even just a hot foot bath has proven helpful to ensuring a good night’s sleep in a scientific study; so even if you can’t soak your entire body, consider a warm foot bath before bed to help you drift into dreamland. Keep the body warm and the room cool.

Sleeping Routines

- Consider eating a light snack containing a protein (such as nuts, low-fat milk, hard-boiled egg, or sunflower seeds) and a complex carbohydrate (such as whole grain crackers or toast) within 2 hours before bed. Going to sleep hungry will often interfere with getting good sleep.
- Consider a cup of calming herbal tea such as chamomile, lemon balm, or passion flower at bedtime.
- Try taking melatonin, a natural substance involved in the sleep-wake cycle, 30 minutes before bedtime each evening. A usual starting dose is 2-3mg per night. Melatonin seems to work best at helping to establish good sleep patterns when it is used each evening consistently.
- Establish a routine. Head to bed at the same time daily.
- Take a warm bath or shower within an hour before bedtime. Try using soap or bubble bath with a relaxing scent, such as lavender.
- If you read something in the evening, choose something soothing, reassuring, or inspiring, such as scriptures or poetry. Save action/adventure stories and headline news for daytime reading.