

# Healthy Living with WHA

# BENEFITS OF SLEEP



## CAN'T SLEEP?

### Here are some tips to help

In this 24/7 age, millions of people have difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep. Are you one of them? Getting enough sleep is important for your health. When you get enough sleep, you:

- Help brain function
- Improve memory and judgement
- Repair muscles, synthesize protein and release growth hormones
- Reduce the likelihood of mood disorders like anxiety and depression
- Reduce the likelihood of health risks like high blood pressure, diabetes, hypertension and obesity

Fortunately, getting a good night's sleep is largely under your control. It involves changing your sleep habits, your daily routine and your attitudes about sleep. Turn this page over to learn some tips for getting a better night's sleep.

## WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

Not all sleep problems are easily treated and could suggest a sleep disorder such as apnea, restless legs syndrome, narcolepsy or some other clinical sleep problem. If your sleep difficulties don't improve by following the tips here, consult your physician.

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## TIPS FOR BETTER SLEEP

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### Establish Relaxing Bedtime Rituals

- Read a book or magazine or listen to audiobooks
- Take a bath, which promotes drowsiness
- Listen to soft music
- Do easy stretching/relaxation exercises
- Wind down with a favorite hobby

### Make Your Bedroom Sleep Friendly

A dark, quiet, cool and comfortable environment can help promote sleep. To help create this:

- Make sure your bed is comfortable.
- Cut down on outside noise with earplugs or a “white noise” appliance.
- Block light with heavy curtains, blackout shades, or a sleep mask to block light. Cover electrical displays.
- Avoid using bright lights before going to bed.
- Keep the temperature comfortably cool and the room well ventilated.
- Keep computers and television out of your bedroom. Establish in your mind that your bedroom is only for sleep and sex.
- Keep pets out of your bedroom if they regularly wake you during the night.

### Stick to a Regular Sleep Schedule

The best way to encourage sleep is to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day, even on the weekends. Keep a sleep journal to track your sleep and help see habits that are helping or sabotaging your sleep.



### Exercise at Least Three Hours before Bedtime

Exercise helps promote sleep, but in the short run it stimulates the body. Schedule exercise at least three hours before bedtime so your body temperature can cool down.

### Things to Avoid Close to Bedtime

- Caffeine: It’s a stimulant, so avoid it from four to six hours before bedtime.
- Alcohol: While alcohol helps some people fall asleep, after a few hours it acts as a stimulant, causing them to wake up. Plus, it lowers the quality of the sleep they do get.
- Tobacco: Do not use tobacco products close to bedtime because nicotine is a stimulant.
- Meals and Snacks: Watch what you eat in the hours before bedtime. Finish dinner several hours before bedtime and avoid foods that cause indigestion, such as fatty, spicy or acidic foods. If you snack at night, eat only foods you know won’t disturb your sleep.
- Fluids: Avoid drinking lots of water, juice, tea, or other fluids in the evening, as doing so may result in frequent bathroom trips throughout the night.

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Your daily routine, sleep schedule and bedtime habits impact the quality of your sleep. Experiment with these tips and discover your personal prescription to a good night’s rest.