

# Healthy Sleep Habits

- 1. Sleep loves a routine:** Set your alarm and get up at the same time every morning irrespective of how much sleep you got during the night. This will help your body acquire a consistent sleep rhythm. Choose and experiment with relaxing activities and do them every night. It takes some work to learn how to relax.
  - Listen to soothing music or a podcast.
  - EXHALE as slow and long as possible by making a small opening in mouth, emptying out your lungs as you bring your belly toward your spine. Let the inhalations happen naturally, and let your abdomen inflate, and repeat.
  - Read.
  - Pray or meditate.
  - Practice gentle, restorative yoga or stretch before going to bed.
  - Elevate your legs, resting them on a few pillows. This position will LOWER YOUR HEART RATE and will decrease pressure from your lower back.
- 2. Turn off** computers, phones, TVs an hour before bedtime. Soft lights for reading are okay.
- 3. Convert night lights** to an orange red color, which is least disruptive to sleep cycles.
- 4. Make sure your bedroom is** QUIET, DARK, and the temperature is COOL, yet comfortable.
- 5. To-Do List:** Keep a pad of paper and write down what you want to remember.
- 6. Limit or eliminate caffeine and alcohol:** Try not to consume alcohol after 7pm and limit your intake to one drink a day. Alcohol can put us to sleep, but doesn't allow us to get the deep sleep we require.
- 7. Eat light:** Carbohydrates are easier on the digestive system. Try to avoid protein and spicy foods before bed.
- 8. If you're wide awake** for more than a few minutes, then get out of bed and do some restful activity. If you feel sleepy later, then return to bed. If not, then move into your day with a calm commitment to try again the coming night. The problem with trying to will our self to sleep is that the more anxious we become trying to force our self to sleep, the more awake we may feel. In this case, try telling your mind that you're fine staying awake.
- 9. Each morning** vigorously exercise for 30 minutes, three to five days a week.
- 10. Spend time outside** in the sunlight, especially in the morning.

11. **Avoid** day time naps.
12. **Maintain** a regular meal schedule.
13. **Consider** a sleep mask to block out light, and earplugs, a fan, or a “white noise” machine, to block out noise.
14. **Consider the timing** of any medications.

## Why We Need Sleep

- ✓ This good habit can boost attention, decision-making and the ability to resist impulses.

---

Good sleep habits can boost attention, decision-making and the ability to resist impulses, a new review of the evidence finds. Professor June Pilcher, who led the study, said:

“Self-control is part of daily decision-making. When presented with conflicting desires and opportunities, self-control allows one to maintain control. Poor sleep habits, which include inconsistent sleep times and not enough hours of sleep, can also lead to health problems, including weight gain, hypertension and illness, according to prior research.

Studies have also found that sleep deprivation decreases self-control but increases hostility in people, which can create problems in the workplace and at home. Improved health and worker performance are two potential benefits, but societal issues such as addictions, excessive gambling and over spending could also be more controllable when sleep deficiencies aren't interfering with one's decision making.” The study was published in the journal, *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* ([Pilcher et al., 2015](#)). Source: <http://www.spring.org.uk/2015/07/the-good-habit-which-boosts-self-control.php#sthash.tlptOQhQ.dpuf>

- ✓ Why the sleep-deprived can be more lonely and less social. Lack of sleep impairs the ability to read facial emotions, a new study finds.

The study compared properly rested people with those who had been awake for 24 hours. Professor Matthew Walker, one of the study's authors, explained how the sleep-deprived fared on the test: “They failed our emotional Rorschach test. Insufficient sleep removes the rose tint to our emotional world, causing an overestimation of threat. This may explain why people who report getting too little sleep are less social and more lonely.”

Brain scans also showed that the emotion-sensing parts of the brain could not even distinguish between friendly and threatening faces.

Source: <http://www.spring.org.uk/2015/07/lack-of-sleep-impairs-an-essential-social-ability.php#sthash.n7ERBJLd.dpuf>