

Getting Better Sleep

Sleep deprivation is hazardous to your health!

Skimping on sleep can affect your health in more ways than you might imagine. When you don't get enough sleep, you have **overall decreased blood flow to your brain**, which disrupts thinking, memory, and concentration.

Sleep deprivation has been associated with many health risks, including: Type 2 diabetes, depression and anxiety, ADD (worsening of symptoms), Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease, stroke, psychosis, weight gain and poor lifestyle choices.

Strategies for Improving your Sleep:

Remember that we are all unique individuals and what works for one person may not work for another. Keep trying new techniques until you find something that works.

Maintain a regular sleep schedule. Go to bed at the same time each night and wake up (regardless of how much sleep you got the night before) at the same time each day, including weekends.

Pay attention to your environment. Your bedroom should be comfortable. Control the temperature so your room isn't too hot or too cold. Also, keep your room as dark as possible while sleeping. Soothing nature sounds, soft music, wind chimes, white noise makers, or even a fan can induce a very peaceful mood and lull you to sleep.

Create a soothing nighttime routine. A warm bath, meditation, or massage can help you relax.

Technology-free bedroom. Take computers, video games, the TV, and cell phones out of your bedroom and turn them off an hour or two before bedtime to allow time to "unwind." Plus, they emit a type of light that stimulates the brain.

Avoid a full stomach. Don't eat for at least two to three hours before going to bed.

Regular exercise. This is very beneficial for insomnia. However, don't do it within four hours of the time you go to sleep as vigorous exercise late in the evening may energize you and keep you awake.

Watch out for stimulants. Don't drink any caffeinated beverages and avoid chocolate, nicotine, and alcohol in the late afternoon or evening. Although alcohol can initially make you feel sleepy, it actually interrupts sleep.

Move the clock so you can't see it. If you wake up in the middle of the night, refrain from looking at the clock. Checking the time can make you feel anxious and make it harder to go back to sleep.

Use the bed only for sleep or sexual activity. Sexual activity releases many natural hormones, releases muscle tension, and boosts a sense of well-being.

Don't toss and turn. If you are unable to fall asleep or return to sleep easily, get up and go to another room to do something relaxing until you feel more tired.