

SLEEP TIPS

Kyle Worsham, MD

1. Set **regular hours** for going to bed and getting up in the morning and stick to them, even on weekends. This may mean waking yourself from a sound sleep shortly after falling asleep, but it will lead to better sleep the next night.
2. **Stay out of bed** if you are not asleep. If you haven't fallen asleep after half an hour, get up and read or watch television. Keep these activities short and non-stimulating such as reading or listening to relaxing music. Wait until you are very sleepy before you return to bed and repeat these directions.
3. Remove your TV from your bedroom. Don't read or watch television in bed and don't eat in bed. **Aim to have your mind and body associate your bed with sleep and only with sleep**
4. **Avoid** taking **naps** during the day or anytime outside the hours you set for sleep. If you do take a nap limit it to under 30 minutes.
5. Drink a glass of **milk** at bedtime. Milk contains L-tryptophan, a natural food substance which helps induce sleep.
6. Eat a small, mild, high carbohydrate **bedtime snack** to settle your stomach.
7. Get some exercise every day, but avoid strenuous exercise close to bedtime.
8. Do whatever you can to **make your bedroom conducive to sleep**. Keep the temperature cool. Ask those near you to respect your need for **quiet**. Make sure it is **dark** and use an eye mask if needed. Some people are soothed by a low, steady noise like a fan or white noise device.
9. Try to use your **bedroom for sleeping only**. Remove excess clutter in your bedroom and don't leave office work or to do lists in stacks near your bed.
10. If worries or thoughts of tomorrow's activities intrude into your consciousness, get out of bed and make a list of them to be dealt with during your waking hours. Consider designating a "**worry chair**"; Get up, sit in the chair, and make yourself worry for 10 or 20 minutes, then go back to bed.
11. **Meditate or practice relaxation techniques** at bedtime. You can purchase guided meditations or relaxation training on tape or CD
12. **Avoid caffeine** containing foods and drinks such as coffee, tea, chocolate, etc.
13. **Avoid alcohol**. It makes you drowsy at first, but in the long run, it's a poor sleeping "pill" which interferes with both the quality and quantity of your sleep.
14. **Don't try** to go to sleep. Sleep is a natural process which cannot be forced. **Let** yourself go to sleep. Avoid keeping track of how much time you sleep or stay awake at night. Refrain from "clock-watching." It may be helpful to turn your clock away so it is not visible from your bed.
15. Establish bedtime **rituals** to signal your mind and body to begin to relax. These rituals should ideally begin 30-60 minutes prior to sleep and become automatic. You may even experiment with making a bedtime checklist that you follow nightly. Try taking a warm bath, listening to relaxing music or reading.
16. **Dim** the lights for 1/2 hour to 1 hour prior to bedtime to stimulate the release of your natural Melatonin.
17. You might lose some sleep at first by following these instructions, but if you **stick to them**, your sleep cycle should gradually improve.