

# 10 tips for a good night's sleep



Quality sleep is essential to your physical and mental health. During sleep, your body works on healing and growing tissue, so you can be your physical best. And your brain filters out waste to make space for important things, so you can be more yourself. Yes, it's normal to experience changes to your sleeping patterns as you age. But don't let this stop you from looking after your body and cognitive health by getting good sleep.

Insomnia means struggling to get the sleep your body needs. Your first line of defence against insomnia is to practice good sleep hygiene. And you can do this by keeping up with healthy habits surrounding your sleep routine.

Here are 10 tips for maintaining healthy sleeping habits as you age.

## 1 Follow a regular sleep schedule

Try to fall asleep at the same time every night by going to bed at a regular time.

Keeping a consistent sleep schedule will allow your body to adjust its rhythm. You'll begin to feel tired at the same time every night, which will help you fall asleep faster when you go to bed.

## 2 Get some sunlight

Be sure to get some bright natural light during the daytime.

Sunlight helps your body keep its internal clock on time. After you stop receiving light at the end of the day, your brain knows to begin producing melatonin. This is the hormone that makes you feel tired.

## 3 Avoid blue light before bed

Electronic devices produce blue light that will disrupt your circadian rhythm. Some devices have a nightlight setting so they produce warmer light after sunset. This is less disruptive than blue light.

Your brain produces melatonin in response to darkness. You'll feel more tired at night if you keep unnatural light low and warm, rather than bright and blue. Avoid screens for at least an hour before bed to minimise the disruption to your sleep quality.

#### **4 Physical activity during the day helps you sleep at night**

Mild to moderate exercise every day keeps your body's rhythm regular and helps you feel tired at bedtime.

So, an active day will help you fall asleep faster. You'll also enjoy the benefits of a deeper sleep.

#### **5 Consider your diet**

Avoid caffeine after midday, especially in coffee but also in tea.

Keep your alcohol consumption low for best sleep quality. Alcohol disrupts your sleep cycles by suppressing REM sleep. This can cause you to wake up in the night and feel less rested.

Large meals too close to bedtime can also contribute to poor sleep. However, a light bedtime snack to stave off hunger might be helpful. A moderate dinner is best if you eat less than two to four hours before bed.

#### **6 Try not to nap after 2 PM**

A power nap of 10 to 30 minutes can be an effective energy booster. This keeps you from entering the deepest stages of sleep, so you don't feel groggy when you wake up.

However, even a short nap such as this will give you energy for several hours. It's best to nap in the early afternoon, so you have time to become tired before bed.

#### **7 Make your bedroom a peaceful place to sleep**

Make sure your bedroom can become cool, quiet, and dark when it's time for bed. Keep your room clean and uncluttered to make it a comfortable haven for sleeping.

Consider eye masks or blackout curtains for your window if you're sensitive to light. You can also use earplugs or white noise machines if outside sounds are keeping you awake. Many smart devices have apps for white noise as well.

## 8 Find your way to wind down

A relaxing nightly ritual will promote structure and regularity in your sleep schedule. Some examples of a bedtime ritual could include:

- Dimming the lights in your house when you're ready to begin winding down.
- Doing gentle stretches.
- Having a warm bath or shower and brushing your teeth.
- Listening to calming music or a relaxing podcast.
- Reading or listening to an audiobook. If you prefer reading to listening, be sure to read your book or e-reader by warm and adequate light. Avoid reading on your phone or tablet and keep away from scrolling social media too close to bedtime.

## 9 Try quiet wakefulness

Lying awake and failing to sleep can be stressful. Dwelling on this failure can make it even harder to sleep, as your distress rises. If you find yourself lying awake, you can do a relaxing activity until you feel sleepy. This can include reading, listening to podcasts, gentle stretching, meditating, or [breathing exercises](#).

It can be helpful to know, however, that lying down with your eyes closed is healthy. This is called [quiet wakefulness](#). While not as restorative as sleep, it is still a form of rest and has benefits for your [memory](#) and [motor skills](#).

You must be relaxed in order to allow sleep to take over. Before sleep comes, accept that it is not here yet but will be soon enough. Enjoy some time of peace, quiet, and darkness.

## 10 Get help if sleeping is a problem

If you continue to have trouble sleeping, speak to a healthcare professional. Insomnia and other sleep related problems can be symptoms of underlying conditions. For example: fatigue after lots of sleep, loud snoring, or gasping for air while asleep. These could all indicate sleep apnoea. Sleep apnoea is a disorder that causes breathing to stop and start during sleep. A doctor can help to manage this.

It's important not to take sleeping pills unless prescribed by your doctor. These can have serious side effects and may not address the cause of your problem.

### More helpful information

Everyone is different so some of these tips may work better for you than others.

If you need more information, get in touch with one of our helpful team on 1800 951 971

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## CONTACT US

**Website:** [liveup.org.au](http://liveup.org.au)

**Email:** [communities@liveup.org.au](mailto:communities@liveup.org.au)

**Phone:** 1800 951 971

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/LiveUpAus](https://facebook.com/LiveUpAus)

LiveUp is a healthy ageing initiative funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.