

HABIT 5: ADEQUATE SLEEP

When you have too much to do and to think about, your sleep is likely to suffer.



Goal: Make sleep a priority and aim for the recommended 7-8 hours of sleep each day.

There are several factors that can interfere with a good night's sleep - work, family commitments and household chores- and the summer brings additional influences. In turn, sleep impacts our personal health. It may be obvious that inadequate sleep makes us more irritable and not able to concentrate. Sleep also impacts our [weight](#) and [immune system](#), and our risk for serious medical illnesses like diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and depression. Here are a few areas to consider as you focus on adequate sleep.

Consider sleep for weight management. [Studies](#) show that proper sleep patterns are critical for healthy metabolic function and insufficient sleep can lead to serious health consequences, including obesity and diabetes. Be sure to consider sleep as you work toward personal goals and for long-term health benefits.

Stick to a regular bed and wake time. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends, holidays and days off. This reinforces your body's sleep-wake cycle and helps promote better sleep at night. If it is light at your bedtime, keep your window coverings closed, the room dark and windows shut to reduce noise.

Be physically active. Physical activity can optimize sleep by helping you fall asleep faster and enjoy deeper sleep. But, timing is important because if you're active too close to bedtime, you might be too energized to fall asleep. For most people, exercise at any time

seems to be [better for sleep](#) than no exercise at all. As a general rule, avoid vigorous exercise in the preceding two hours before sleep.

Use the summer sun to your advantage. Exposure to bright sun in the morning can help set your internal clock and help you rise earlier in the morning. Reduce exposure to bright light in the evening 2-3 hours before sleep as exposure to sunlight can slow release of melatonin, our body's hormone that helps regulate sleep onset.

Watch what you're drinking. In the warmer months, we tend to have an increased liquid intake to stay hydrated. Take note of what you're grabbing to quench your thirst. The stimulating effects of caffeine - which take hours to wear off, especially as one grows older - can wreak havoc with quality sleep. And even though alcohol might make you feel sleepy at first, it can disrupt sleep later in the night. Also, limit how much you drink before bed, to reduce disruptive middle-of-the-night trips to the toilet.

Shut your mind off. When you have too much to do and to think about, your sleep is likely to suffer. To help restore peace to your life, consider [healthy ways to manage stress](#). Get organized, set priorities and delegate tasks. Before bed, jot down what's on your mind and set it aside for tomorrow. If you [wake up and can't fall back asleep](#) within 20 minutes or so, get out of bed. Read printed material, listen to music or do other quiet activities until you feel sleepy.

Unplug. Americans report [very active technology use](#) in the hour before sleep. Create a sleeping environment that is free of stimulating thoughts. Try avoiding electronic communications in the hour before bed, especially in the bedroom.