

Tips for Better Sleep

This is a highly individual process and you have to find what works for you. Here are some general tips and for improving sleep:

Before Going to Bed:

- Develop a bedtime ritual: Try a hot bath, calming music, or meditation.
- Use meditation apps to help you fall asleep, or to go back to sleep if you awaken in the night. Insight Timer is a fantastic free phone app, with thousands of meditations of varying lengths. For other helpful apps, see the Toolkit.
- Avoid TV just before bed, or reading anything disturbing. They can cause anxiety and wakefulness.
- Avoid alcohol near bedtime. Alcohol can act as a stimulant when it is metabolized, and may wake you in the night. Likewise, avoid consuming caffeine late in the day.
- Try not to eat a big meal within 2-3 hours before bedtime. In that same period, try to avoid acidic liquids and spicy foods, which can increase the likelihood of heartburn.

In the Bedroom:

- Don't charge your cell phone in the bedroom. The sounds and light it produces are sleep-killers.
- Reduce ambient light in the room. Blackout curtains are helpful, and if you can't eliminate all light, try using a soft eye mask. If you have a bright clock or other electronics with sharp lights, unplug them or block the light with a small towel or tape.
- If it's not quiet where you sleep, try ear plugs or a sound machine.
- Make sure your mattress, pillow, and sheets are comfortable.
- Try to create a comfortable temperature in the room where you sleep. A room that is either too hot or too cold will interfere with a good night's sleep.
- If you do awaken in the night, try very slow, deep breathing. Put your hand on your belly to feel it rise and fall with each long inhale.

In General:

- Find ways to manage stress.
- Get plentiful exercise. A morning workout is ideal, as exercise too close to bedtime can be a stimulant.
- Take walks outdoors, in nature if possible.
- See a therapist, if you are facing important challenges that you don't feel equipped to meet. Keeping these feelings to yourself can make it more difficult to sleep as you may become overwhelmed by these when you lay down to sleep.
- Meditation, and moving meditations, such as yoga, Qi Gong, and T'ai Chi, have been shown to help sleep patterns.
- Try to avoid sleeping pills and sedatives unless advised by your doctor.