



your health & well-being

Sleeping Better

A good night's sleep is important for your physical and emotional health. Getting enough sleep can help your mood and reduce your stress level. It may also help you stay healthy by keeping your immune system strong.

However, most people have trouble sleeping occasionally. It may be due to temporary stress, worry, or an irregular schedule – but if the inability to sleep well continues for weeks or months, it can become a health problem.

Sometimes poor sleep becomes a problem in itself, and dwelling on it only makes it worse. Changing your beliefs about sleep and your everyday behaviors can improve your sleep dramatically. Whatever the cause, there are things you can do:

Improve the quality of your sleep

The following measures may help you sleep more soundly and wake up feeling more refreshed:

- Minimize noise in the house, or mask it with a steady low noise such as a fan on slow speed, or a radio tuned to quiet static. Use comfortable earplugs if needed.
- Move the TV and computer out of your bedroom.
- Keep your bedroom quiet, dark, comfortable, and cool. Use curtains or blinds to block out light. Consider using soothing music or a "white noise" machine to block out noise. If you can't darken the room, try a sleep mask.
- Use a pillow and mattress that are comfortable for you.
- Set aside time for problem-solving earlier in the day and don't carry anxious thoughts to bed. Try writing down your worries in a "worry book," then set it aside well before bedtime.
- If you can't fall asleep, or you wake up in the middle of the night and don't get back to sleep quickly, get out of bed and go to another room until you feel sleepy.

Your evening and bedtime routine

Having an evening routine and a set bedtime will help your body get used to a sleeping schedule. You may want to ask others in your household to help you with your routine.

- Unwind from the day. Take a warm shower or bath, listen to soothing music, or drink a cup of non-caffeinated tea before bedtime.
- Don't do stressful or energizing activities in the evening.
- Go to bed at the same time every night. And get up at the same time every morning, even if you feel tired.

If you can't sleep

- Imagine yourself in a peaceful, pleasant place. Focus on the details and feelings that are relaxing.
- Get up and do a quiet or boring activity until you feel sleepy.
- If you wake up often because you have to go to the bathroom, don't drink any liquids after 6 p.m.

Your activities during the day

Your habits and activities can affect how well you sleep. Here are some tips:

- Exercise during the day, but not after 5 p.m. because it may be harder to fall asleep.
- Get outside during daylight hours. Spending time in sunlight helps to reset your body's sleep and wake cycles.
- Limit anything that has caffeine in it, such as coffee, tea, cola, and chocolate.
- Don't drink alcohol before bedtime. Alcohol can cause you to wake up more often during the night.
- Don't smoke or use tobacco, especially in the evening. Nicotine can keep you awake.
- Don't take naps during the day, especially close to bedtime.
- Don't take medicine that may keep you awake, or make you feel hyper or energized, right before bed. Your doctor can tell you if your medicine may do this and if you can take it earlier in the day.

If you have chronic insomnia, it may be caused by an underlying factor such as depression, anxiety, or pain. Your insomnia will probably improve or disappear when the cause is treated successfully. If you can't sleep because you are in pain or have an injury, if you often feel anxious at night or have bad dreams, talk to your doctor.

Source: Healthwise®





june tip of the month

Is someone snoring?

You snore when the flow of air from your mouth or nose to your lungs makes the tissues of your throat vibrate when you sleep.

Snoring can cause headaches, difficulty in concentration, fatigue and reduced work performance. If snoring keeps you or your bed partner from getting a good night's sleep, one or both of you may feel tired during the day. You may be able to treat snoring by making changes in your activities and in the way you sleep.

- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Quit smoking.
- Sleep on your side and not your back.
- Limit your use of alcohol and medicines such as sedatives before you go to bed.
- If a stuffy nose makes your snoring worse, use nose strips, decongestants, or nasal sprays to help you breathe.

When to call a doctor: sleep apnea

Sleep apnea is as common as adult diabetes and affects more than 12 million Americans, according to the National Institutes of Health. Risk factors include being male, overweight, and over the age of 40, but sleep apnea can strike anyone at any age, even children. Untreated, sleep apnea can cause high blood pressure and other cardiovascular diseases, memory problems, weight gain, and headaches. It can also be responsible for job impairment and motor vehicle crashes. Fortunately, sleep apnea can be diagnosed and treated.

Call your doctor if you or your bed partner:

- Snores loudly and heavily.
- Snores and feels sleepy during the day.
- Snores and falls asleep at inappropriate times, such as when talking or while eating.
- Stops breathing, gasps, or chokes during sleep.

Any of these may be signs of sleep apnea.

Source: American Sleep Apnea Association

On myCIGNA.com this month

After a sleepless night, it's hard to do your best job. When you are tired, your alertness, concentration and performance suffer. And that increases your risk of accidents or mistakes.

If you are concerned about how long or how soundly you sleep, check out the **CIGNA Sleep Better, Feel Better, Live Better** online coaching program. It can help improve both the quality and quantity of your sleep. Go to [myCIGNA.com](#) and click the myHealth tab to enroll online, and start getting some quality zzzs.



The average person needs seven to eight hours of sleep per night, but it differs for every person. Some may need 10 hours a night, and others need much less. If you sleep longer on the weekends than during the week, you probably aren't getting the sleep you need every night.



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