

# Sleep

“Sleep is that golden chain that ties health and our bodies together.” –*Thomas Dekker*

“Each night, when I go to sleep, I die. And the next morning, when I wake up, I am reborn.” –*Mahatma Gandhi*

“Sleep is the best meditation.” –*Dalai Lama*

## Sleep Schedule

- Reserve the last hour before going to bed to create a calming habit for yourself (see nervous system handout for options) such as rocking, meditation, drinking a hot drink, and reading a good (but not too exciting) book
- Keep a regular sleep cycle—if you cannot fall asleep at an exact time, go to bed and turn out the lights at the same time every night anyway, even on weekends
- Avoid napping (this disrupts the body’s circadian rhythm). If you feel you must nap, limit naps to 30 minutes or less
- Don’t get up early to finish a project, stay up later—this causes the least disruption to your rhythm
- Avoid setting your alarm earlier than 6 am if possible—prepare the night before if 6 am will crimp your routine
- If you must regularly get up before 6 am, reset your body clock by ensuring darkness and quiet for an early-to-bed schedule and waking up to bright lights
- Don’t let anything disturb your natural sleep cycle (animals in bed with you, TV on, spouse flipping and turning, sounds, lights)

## Sleep and Technology

- Exposure to bright lights in the evening sets the body clock “forward”, making you want to sleep later (10 min. for every hour of exposure)
- DON’T expose yourself to flickering screens (TV, cell phones, laptops—these causes brain arousal), don’t keep electronics these in the bedroom

## Sleep Atmosphere

- Pay close attention to sleep atmosphere: no scents (most odors disrupt sleep—except vanilla-almond), cool temperature, minimal noise, no distractions, utmost comfort with sleep surface (e.g., down pillows, down comforter, high thread count sheets, great mattress, etc.)
- Use your bedroom only for bedroom activities—don’t have your office/work on work activities there
- Don’t watch the clock, rather get up and do a calming or boring activity until you feel sleepy, then go back to bed
- Develop sleep rituals—calming activities to remind your body that it is time to sleep

## Sleep and Diet

- Avoid snacks with additives/artificial sweeteners before bedtime and don't overeat—food digestion causes an increased in body temperature, and a slight decrease is needed for better sleep
- Have a dairy product or light carbohydrate shortly, but not right before, bed to increase melatonin production—see above about body temperature
- Avoid alcohol/caffeine/nicotine 4-6 hours before bed
- DON'T drink caffeine after lunch: the body takes up to 8 hours to metabolize caffeine's effects in the body

## Sleep and Exercise

- Regular exercise can deepen sleep
- Exercise NO LATER than 2 hours before bed time. Cardiovascular exercise is known for flushing the stress hormones that are produced from non-physical stress out of the body (in essence, using them for their intended purpose and then excreting the by-products)

## Sleep and Medications

- Some antidepressants decrease Serotonin, which then decreases Melatonin—talk to your doctor about this if you are on one and having trouble sleeping

## Sleep and Miscellaneous

- Control hormones, disease, travel as these all affect the body's rhythm
- The greater our body weight, the more sleep we need
- Keep a pad and pencil by your bed to write down, and therefore free your mind, of arousing thoughts