

BEST PRACTICES

Problems sleeping can be caused by changes in health, schedule, and lifestyle. You may start sleeping better if you can take some basic steps, as listed below.

Get some physical activity into your day.

No need to join a gym; doing yard work and even housework can help you feel tired enough to sleep better.

Change your lighting. Expose yourself to bright light early in the day. In the evening, dim your home lights. These will help you make sleep hormones.

Don't nap unless it's before 3pm and for less than an hour.

Eat (and drink) like an early bird. Have dinner early. Avoid drinks with caffeine. But don't go to bed so hungry that it wakes you up.

Go hot, then cold. Take a hot bath or shower 1-2 hours before bed, then lower your thermostat to 65-70 degrees. Cooler temps set you up for better sleep.

Make it routine. Sleep experts suggest going to bed and waking the same time each day. If you stay up late, gradually change your bedtime to earlier hours.

Wind down. Play soft music, meditate, stretch, read. These relaxation activities can be a doorway by which your brain calms down and gets you ready for sleep.

Smoke or drink? Not now. Nicotine revs up your nervous system. Alcohol may make you drowsy but it messes up brain chemicals that keep you asleep.

Aromatherapy may be helpful. Inhaling the scent of lavender changes brain chemistry in ways that promote sleep.

Keep it dark and quiet. Remove devices which give off light. Dim the alarm clock, wear a sleep mask, and use silicone ear plugs to block out noise.

Don't stay in bed without sleeping. If after 20 minutes of trying you aren't asleep, get up and engage in a calming kind of task until you feel drowsy.

Write it down if it bothers you. Keep a notepad next to your bed. If thoughts keep you awake, jot them down and deal with them the next day.



If none of these help you get the 7-8 hours of sleep needed each night, consider talking to your doctor for advice.