

Build Resilience with Better Sleep

Sleep impacts all our bodily functions and systems; it's when our body and brain "clean house" each and every night. Our brains and bodies go through a series of reparation and consolidation processes during sleep that affect all aspects of our functioning. Good sleep therefore protects and rebuilds the resilience of our:

Physical health: heart and blood pressure recovery, regulation of appetite, growth hormone and bone repair, increased energy.

Mental health: capacity for learning and memory, optimized mood and concentration, capacity to make decisions and problem-solve.

Immune health: detoxification, cellular regeneration, cognitive function repair, improved metabolic function.

Which health benefit am I seeking to improve with better sleep?

We go through 4 to 6 sleep cycles per night, each lasting approximately 90 minutes.

Quality sleep, with adequate deep and REM stages, is essential for cognitive function, emotional stability, and physical well-being. By prioritizing good sleep habits, we can enhance our resilience and improve our daily functioning, ensuring that our bodies and brains operate at their best.

Choosing the "best" tip to improve our sleep

Like physical or dental hygiene, sleep hygiene refers to the lifestyle factors and habits we engage in, both during our waking and sleeping hours, that will impact our sleep. Our sleep hygiene runs on a 24-hour schedule and there are a multitude of choices we can make; the key to not getting overwhelmed by change is choosing the ones more pertinent and accessible to our current lifestyle.

Our circadian rhythm regulates almost all our energetic systems including our sleep cycles, and it thrives on consistency. The “best” sleep tips are therefore the ones we’re ready, willing, and capable of incorporating right away and doing consistently over time. Going through our day one section at a time and choosing where we can reasonably make a difference:

Upon waking

- Get up at the same time each morning, regardless of how much sleep you had the night before. This will help normalize the sleep-wake cycle and bring our circadian rhythm towards consistency.
- Don’t press snooze. A sleep cycle lasts around 90 minutes; if you fall asleep, you’ll be awoken by your alarm a few minutes later, likely in a much deeper state of drowsiness. You also remove the negative “no... I’m not ready... I’m too tired” thoughts from your state of mind first thing in the morning.
- Make your bed. It’s a positive ritual that also makes bedtime much more enticing later.
- Get exposure to natural light as quickly as possible.
- Stay away from screens, media, and other people's priorities.
- Take a few minutes to create our goals or intentions for the day.

During the morning

- Eat a nourishing breakfast: protein, fiber, healthy fats and carbohydrates.
- If you exercise, your intensity can be moderate or high.

During the afternoon

- If you exercise, your intensity can be moderate or high.
- Stop caffeine consumption 4 to 12 hours before sleep.
- If needed: a 20-to-30-minute nap at maximum and during daylight hours. Any longer or later than that will impact your circadian rhythm.

During the evening (2 to 3 hours before bed)

- If you exercise, your intensity can be gentle to moderate.
- Consume easy-to-digest meals and avoid eating 2 hours before bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol as it disrupts sleep cycles and often accentuates snoring and sleep apnea problems.
- Avoid liquids if you tend to urinate during the night and have trouble going back to sleep.
- Gradually prepare for sleep by decreasing all forms of stimulation. Create peace of mind by decreasing visual and auditory, mental and cognitive, as well as physical and environmental stimulation.

At bedtime

- Go to bed at the same time every night, even on weekends if you're looking to improve your sleep. This will help normalize the sleep-wake cycle and bring our circadian rhythm towards consistency.
- Create a dark and quiet bedroom dedicated exclusively to sleep and love.
- Reduce or remove all screens, LEDs, etc.
- Have moments of gentle reflection or meditation thanks to apps, reading, or music.

Which tips are accessible to me based on my current lifestyle?

Finding the routine and rituals that work best

Parents will agree that having a bedtime routine is necessary for young children; it helps them have a good night and a great next day. Adults, with busy and sometimes stressful lives, can benefit just as much if not even more!

The two best practices to a successful bedtime routine are consistency and personalization; trying and adopting one step at a time will help us benefit from new-found positive routines.

