

To feel most rested, stick to a sleep schedule, even on days off. Studies have shown that sleeping in just two hours later on the weekend can adversely affect sleep for days afterward.

Time Your Exercise:

Although regular exercise improves sleep overall, vigorous activity within three hours of bedtime may make it difficult to fall asleep. Be sure to schedule fitness sessions well before bed.



Tips for Daytime Sleepers

Your body's natural rhythms make daytime sleep difficult. Get the shut-eye you need by following these guidelines:

BEFORE BED:

- Take a warm bath, listen to soothing music or sit quietly.
- Avoid reading an exciting book, watching television, paying bills or doing other activities that stimulate your brain.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol for at least three hours before sleep.
- Eat a light snack, but nothing heavy or greasy.

AS YOU SLEEP:

- Keep the room cool: your body sleeps best at a lower temperature.
- Darken the room with light-blocking shades or a blanket tacked over the windows.
- Use a white-noise machine or fan to block noise, or wear earplugs.

Rest & Recharge

Strategies for Shiftworkers

Wake-Up Call

Did you know that your body and brain experience four different stages of sleep?

1. Transitional
2. Light sleep
3. Deep sleep
4. Rapid eye movement (REM)

Shiftworkers often feel tired because daytime sleepers don't sleep as long as night sleepers, and may miss a stage or two. Also, changing sleep schedules as you change shifts may disrupt the natural progression of sleep cycles. When you change your schedule, it can take one to two weeks for your sleep patterns to become normal again.

The deepest stages of sleep (deep sleep and REM sleep) are when the body and mind renew themselves. If you wake up during deep sleep, when your brain is producing long "delta" waves, you may feel groggy. Also, if you wake during REM sleep, when dream activity occurs in the brain, you may remember dreams and feel disoriented.

Consistently missing out on the deeper stages of sleep can cause fatigue, difficulty focusing and even lead to health problems.

What to do: To feel your best, you must complete all the sleep stages four to five times during a sleep session. Each cycle takes about 90 minutes. Most experts say that people require six to eight hours of sleep to function at the highest alertness and productivity level, although some people may need more.

Sleep: It's All In Your Head

Sometimes barriers to sleep can be emotional or mental as well as physical. Make sure your mind is ready to settle down.

Communicate:

- Let the people you care about know your schedule.
- Ask family and friends not to disturb you during your sleep time.
- Explain the demands of your schedule, and help loved ones understand that getting enough sleep will help you be a better partner, parent and friend.
- Spend extra time with people when your schedule permits — keeping relationships healthy ensures that they are a source of support rather than sleep-robbing worry.

Tune Out

The events of the day may replay themselves in your mind and keep you from sleeping, especially if you are trying to sleep during the daytime when the brain wants to be active.

Try this exercise: Lie comfortably in bed. Tense each muscle individually, starting with your toes, and then imagine it melting into the bed beneath you as you slowly exhale. Concentrate on every muscle in your body one at a time, working your way up to your head. Don't forget your facial muscles and your scalp — chances are, by the time you get there you'll be snoring.



Shhhh ... Nap In Progress

Research has shown that naps are a big boost to productivity and alertness, although people often fight naps because they are associated with laziness. Here's how to get the most out of naps, and use them to your benefit.

1. Follow the same rules for naps as you do for regular sleep — a quiet area, darkness, cool temperature, etc.
2. Avoid caffeine and alcohol for at least three hours before napping.
3. Nap between 1 and 5 p.m. or during pre-dawn hours, when the body's alertness naturally dips.
4. Limit naps to 20 minutes, or make them longer than 90 minutes to follow the body's sleep cycles and feel most rested.
5. Tell those around you that you'll be taking a nap.
6. If you feel groggy after napping, stretch and move around; usually the feeling will pass quickly, while the nap's benefits of refreshed alertness and productivity can last for hours.

Did You Know?

It's impossible to sleep too much. Unless you suffer from a sleep disorder, you will wake up (without an alarm) when you've slept enough.