

20 Ways to Sleep Well



1. COPE WITH STRESS, DON'T IGNORE IT, OR FIGHT AGAINST IT

Inability to cope effectively with stress leads to restless sleep and fewer episodes of deep sleep that your body and mind need to restore and repair for the next day. Stress is a natural part of life and having a stress self-care plan and support system in place will help you cope with daily stressors.

2. AVOID CAFFEINE AFTER MID-AFTERNOON

Caffeine is a stimulant that can keep you from getting restful sleep. Caffeine can be found in coffee, tea, soda, chocolate and some medications. Avoid consuming any of these products at least six hours before you go to bed. Don't use prescription medications that are not prescribed to you.

3. AVOID USING ALCOHOL, NICOTINE OR OTHER SUBSTANCES TO HELP YOU SLEEP

Alcohol may help you fall asleep, but it won't help you stay asleep. When your body starts to metabolize the alcohol, it acts as a stimulant and leads to a restless night's sleep. Limit your daily intake of alcohol to no more than 4 drinks/day for males and no more than 3 drinks/day for females. Avoid drinking within three hours of going to bed. Don't take sleeping pills, unless prescribed. Avoid using tobacco products too close to bedtime, they also act as a stimulant.

4. DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE OF THE COLLEGE ALL-NIGHTER

Want to do well on that exam? GO TO BED. When you are sleeping, your brain is very active consolidating your memories so that you can retain all the information you acquired during the day. Additionally, sleep helps make connections between new thoughts and ideas so that you're better able to concentrate, be creative and problem solve. Sleep your way to that A!

5. MAKE YOUR ROOM QUIET, DARK, AND COOL

Residence halls and roommates can be loud, wear earplugs or use "white noise" to block sound. You can purchase a white noise machine, use a fan, or download the MyNoise app. Use heavy curtains, blackout shades, or an eye mask to block light, a powerful cue that tells the brain that it's time to wake up. If possible, keep the temperature comfortably cool (between 60 and 75°F).

6. TURN YOUR ROOM INTO A SLEEP SANCTUARY

Create a sleeping space that is peaceful and inviting. Treat yourself to bedding that is inviting by purchasing quality pillows, sheets, blankets, comforters and even a mattress topper. Be sure to make your bed everyday so your body feels it is entering a relaxing space when you climb into bed at night.

7. ESTABLISH A RELAXING PRE-BED ROUTINE

You are busy all day and your mind and body need time to ease into going to sleep. At least one hour before bed, engage in relaxing activities that you enjoy. Take a warm shower (the rise, then fall in body temperature promotes drowsiness), read a book (not a text book), watch Netflix (but not too much), write in your journal, meditate, do some light stretching or practice relaxation exercises. Avoid activities that may be more stimulating and stressful than restful, such as going on social media.

8. DON'T BRING YOUR WORRIES TO BED

Stressful thoughts can cause the body to secrete the stress hormone cortisol, which is associated with increasing alertness. When you go to bed, your worries aren't needed and you can't do anything about them at the moment anyways. To help calm your mind, try writing your worries, thoughts, and to-dos —and then put them aside. If you don't want to write, you can also draw or doodle.

9. LIMIT YOUR ACTIVITIES IN BED

Your bed should only be used for sleep and sex. If possible, try to avoid studying in bed.

10. DON'T BRING ELECTRONICS TO BED

The light in electronics stimulates the brain and suppresses the release of melatonin, a hormone that helps you fall and stay asleep. It is okay to wear your Fitbit, Apple Watch or other health tracking device to bed to help you learn more about how much and what quality sleep you are getting at night.



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11. USE AROMATHERAPY

Lavender and jasmine scents have been found to calm the mind and body and facilitate sleep. If you have essential oils, put 1-2 drops in a non-scented carrier lotion and apply to your feet before bed. You can also add oil to an aromatherapy diffuser or sprinkle one or two drops on your pillow. If you have dried lavender or jasmine buds, close your eyes, and breathe in the scent from the flower.

12. GO TO SLEEP WHEN YOU ARE TIRED

Going to bed when you are not tired can lead to frustration and restlessness. If you're not asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed and do something relaxing (go back to tip 7).

13. DON'T STRESS OUT IF YOU WAKE UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Okay, you wake up in the middle of the night and can't fall back asleep. Try to avoid staring at the clock. This will only lead to frustration and stress and make it difficult for you to fall asleep. If you can't get back to sleep in about 20 minutes, get up and do something relaxing (go back to tip 7). Yup, it's all about relaxing. Keep the lights dim and don't use technology, which can stimulate your brain and keep you up longer. Check in with your body and notice if your eyelids are feeling heavy, if so, that means you are ready to return to bed.

14. LET THE SUN SHINE

Your sleep is connected with the circadian rhythm of the sun and moon. In the morning, let the light into your room. The natural light will connect with your internal clock and aid you in waking up in the morning and going to sleeping at night.

15. KEEP A CONSISTENT SLEEP SCHEDULE, EVEN ON THE WEEKENDS

Having a regular sleep schedule helps to ensure better quality and consistent sleep. Going to bed and waking up at the same time each day sets the body's "internal clock" to expect sleep at a certain time night after night. Try to stick as closely as possible to your routine on weekends to avoid a Monday morning sleep hangover.

16. NAP EARLIER IN THE DAY AND KEEP IT SHORT

Daily naps are good and should be limited to 20 minutes a day; if longer it can interfere with your ability to get to sleep and to stay asleep at night. Even if you don't fall asleep, finding time during the day to lie down, be motionless and close your eyes has relaxation benefits. Take a nap at least five hours before your normal bedtime to avoid disrupting your night sleep. Avoid napping if you are experiencing difficulty sleeping at night.

17. WOWZA, EASE UP ON THAT HEAVY DINNER AND FLUID INTAKE

Putting off eating dinner until late and then grabbing a slice at DHOP at 10 p.m. won't help you sleep well. Eat dinner several hours before bed and avoid foods that cause indigestion. If you get hungry at night, enjoy a light snack that doesn't contain sugar or caffeine. Avoid drinking too many fluids close to bedtime so that you won't have to disrupt your sleep for a nighttime trip to the bathroom.

18. MOVE YOUR BODY AND DO IT EARLIER IN THE DAY

Body movement during the day is a great way to get a better night's sleep. Rigorous body movement releases stimulating stress hormones which are great to helping you cope with stress. Do your high-power movement at least three hours before bed. Exercising too close to bed could leave you feeling too stimulated to sleep.

19. FOLLOW THROUGH AND START OVER AGAIN AND AGAIN

These tips may look easy but you may find them difficult to integrate into your daily routine. Be patient with yourself and don't expect immediate results. If you fall off track that is okay too, in fact, that is expected when starting something new. Just be gentle with yourself and start over again.

20. GET A SLEEP COACH

Working towards a new goal can be difficult to do alone. If you need extra help creating a personalized sleep self-care plan that works for you, make an appointment for sleep coaching. Our wellness educators/counselors can help you create a plan of action that meets your needs and help you determine if you should consult with a medical clinician.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE AT UNH HEALTH & WELLNESS

Sleep Coaching Meet individually for a sleep coaching session with one of our certified wellness coaches to create a personalized sleep plan.

Medical Care Meet with one of our clinicians to discuss your sleep concerns and possible treatments options, including medication, acupuncture, hypnosis or lifestyle changes.

Stress Coping Services Try one or all of our wellness services including, guided meditation (individual or group), light therapy, massage therapy, pet therapy and biofeedback.

Events, Workshops & Groups Attend an event or register for one of our groups to start taking care of your wellness. Browse upcoming programs at www.unh.edu/health/events