

[IMAGE]

## Rest Easy: 5 Ways to Get Better Sleep Tonight

By Editorial Staff

It's one thing to fall asleep; it's another to *stay* asleep all night and even another to enjoy a full night of *peaceful, restorative* sleep that gives your body and mind an appropriate setting to repair, recharge and renew. Too many Americans don't get enough sleep and when they do, it's often interrupted or punctuated by constant tossing and turning. That's bad news from a health perspective, both in the short and long term. According to the Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School, "a lack of adequate sleep can affect judgment, mood, ability to learn and retain information, and may increase the risk of serious accidents and injury. In the long term, chronic sleep deprivation may lead to a host of health problems including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and even early mortality [death]."

Suffice it to say that sleep is a big deal, which makes ensuring you get enough sleep of prime importance. Here are five ways you can get better sleep tonight and every night thereafter:

*1. Wind down:* Transition from your busy, hectic day at least an hour before bed so you're not up half the night. Stress and sleep are bad partners, to say the least, so your pre-sleep routine should emphasize calmness and relaxation. Take a bath or shower, listen to soft music or meditate – whatever it takes for you to leave your stress-filled day behind you (at least until morning).

improve your sleep - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark *2. Exercise early:* Physical activity has plentiful health benefits, but if you work out before bed, it can make sleep difficult. On the other hand, exercising first thing in the morning will make sleeping at night easier because your body will be fatigued after a long day. Exercising right before bed can leave you amped up, sore and/or unable to settle in for a long, relaxing night's rest.

*3. Shut the fridge:* Put police tape around the fridge after dinner and you'll likely get better sleep because your inability to pursue late-night eating (cheating) will let your body relax and doze off. The premise is simple, if you think about it: The body is a factory, processing and burning food all day. If the factory doesn't close for the evening, it keeps on processing – and you stay awake while it does. Try eating a cheeseburger and fries an hour before bed; your eyes may feel sleepy, but your stomach will stay wide

awake – and so will you.

*4. Timing is everything:* Ever heard of a circadian rhythm? As sleep goes, it's our body's internal "clock" and it runs on a 24-hour schedule. To maximize restorative sleep, regulate your internal clock by going to sleep and waking up at around the same time every night and morning, respectively. It might be difficult to go to sleep on a regular schedule because of various factors, but you can usually control when you wake up – it's just a matter of willing yourself out of bed.

*5. Don't push it:* One of the worst habits of chronically poor sleepers is the tendency to push it; to stay up longer than the body is willing. Sometimes that's unavoidable, but too often Americans spend hour after late-night hour glued to the television (or these days, the computer), fighting off sleep and suffering the consequences. When the body says rest, listen and go to bed. You'll be thankful you did.

Talk to your doctor of chiropractic about these and other simple ways to enjoy better sleep naturally.

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