

[IMAGE]

# How To Get A Great Night's Sleep Without Taking Medicine

By Editorial Staff

Sleep - it provides rest for the weary and refreshment of your body and soul. Depending on who you are, you can spend eight hours or more in bed at a time, trying to get the rest you need. But a good night's sleep is more than time spent in bed. There is a quality component to your sleep that is a major factor in how you feel when you wake up.

There are a number of ways you can improve the quality of your sleep. Some of these ways involve what you do before you go to bed. But the most important factor is what you actually sleep *on* once you crawl into bed. You spend eight hours with your head on your pillow and a mattress supporting your back. Your chances of getting a great night's sleep are almost impossible if your pillow and mattress fail to support the different segments of your spine correctly.

## Preparing for Slumber

What you do and what you eat before you go to bed can play a significant role in the quality of your sleep. Your state of mind and your body's metabolism will impact your ability to fall asleep and sleep deeply. You can prepare yourself for a great night's sleep. Here are some simple do's and don'ts that will help facilitate a great night's rest:

### Do's

**TURN OFF WORK** You can't sleep soundly with your mind still at work. If your body has left the job, your mind should, too. You need and deserve time to refresh yourself and enjoy life.

Young woman stretching her arms in bed. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **CALM YOURSELF**  
Frustration, anxiety and worry can intrude into everyone's life. The question is, how do you handle it? Take time at the end of your day with meditation, prayer, reading, relaxation techniques, talking to a loved one or just sitting quietly; let go of anything that might be bothering you, at least for the time being.

**EXERCISE AND/OR STRETCH** Many people find that engaging in physical activity before going to bed helps relieve the tension that can build up by the end of the day. The more tension you feel, the more vigorously you may need to exercise. Just remember to give yourself an appropriate "cool-down" period before getting into bed, or you won't be able to fall asleep.

**EAT AT LEAST ONE HOUR BEFORE BEDTIME** Give your body plenty of time to begin digesting your food before you try to sleep. This will reduce that bloated feeling you may have and will help your body feel more relaxed.

### **Don'ts**

**AVOID MENTAL OVERSTIMULATION** It's important to relax after working all day. But replacing job worries with violent movies or mindless video games may actually cause your brain to concentrate more intensely than it would if you were still at work. Make sure your evening activities are relaxing and nurturing, rather than of a combative or problem-solving nature.

**AVOID SWEETS** Eating foods that give your body quick bursts of energy will thwart your ability to relax. Sugars and other simple carbohydrates boost your energy level, making it harder to fall asleep. (They're also not healthy for you, nutritionally speaking.) Consider foods that are more complex and thus digest more slowly, such as light proteins, vegetables or small amounts of fruit.

**AVOID CONFRONTING DIFFICULT ISSUES** The end of the day is not always the best time to discuss or address difficult issues. Beginning a discussion that may lead to an argument will likely leave you frustrated and unable to sleep. Whenever possible, wait until the morning or weekend, when you can face the dilemma with a fresh perspective and plenty of energy. This will ensure that you have adequate time and energy to reach a solution, rather than just an exhausted rehashing of the issues.

### **The Right Stuff**

Even given all of the above, many people still fail to get the sleep they need. If you're one of these people, you know how hard it can be. Waking up sore, stiff and still feeling tired can be caused by what you're sleeping on - the wrong pillow and/or the wrong mattress.

### **Do You Have the Right Pillow?**

Your pillow is probably the most important component of restful sleep, as it cradles your head and neck for many hours. Your pillow is also the least expensive, most immediate solution to a poor night's sleep and has the potential to address the most common ailments: headaches and neck pain.

- Does your pillow do a good job of supporting your neck and head? If you find your head in an uncomfortable position or feel the need to fold your pillow, you need a new one.
- Is there a better choice available? There is a seemingly endless selection of pillows on the market. Determining which type is best for you is the challenge. There are more conventional pillows, filled with down feathers or foam. There are also pillows specifically designed to support your neck and head in a more anatomically correct position. Again, your chiropractor will be the best source to determine what you need, particularly if you are suffering from neck pain or headaches.

Young woman sleeping. - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark **Do You Have the Right Mattress?**

Your mattress should be chosen carefully, considering that approximately one-third of your life will be spent on it. You will want to consider a specialized mattress that will give your spine the support you need. This is particularly true as you get older.

- How long has it been since you bought a new mattress? Mattress makers will tell you that even the best mattresses will only last eight to 10 years. If it's been more than eight years, or if your original mattress wasn't that great to begin with, it's probably time to buy a new mattress.
- Will a conventional coil mattress give you the support you need for your spine? This is a very important question and can only be answered by a doctor of chiropractic or other health care provider who specializes in spinal health. Many people find the usual coil mattresses just don't provide what they need. Ask your doctor if they think you need a mattress specifically designed to ease the pressure on your spine.
- What will this special mattress cost? Coil mattresses have several available options, including latex and "memory foam" models. The cost varies, depending on the quality of the model. However, generally speaking, specialized mattresses are no more expensive than their conventional counterparts.

So, there you have it: the keys to getting the great night's sleep you deserve - every night. Talk to your doctor when considering which mattress and pillow are best for you, and remember the do's and don'ts of preparing for restful sleep. Your body and mind will thank you for it.

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