

Mattress To Go Beducation®

General Better Sleep Tips

- 1. Develop a regular sleep and wake schedule.** Your body will fall asleep more easily if placed on a schedule. Get out of bed within a half hour of the same time every day, even on weekends. Exposure to early morning sunlight as soon as you awake can help establish a more normal sleep pattern.
- 2. Create a sleep-conducive environment.** Maintain a cool, dark and quiet room.
- 3. Sleep on quality pillows and bedding.** If your pillows are not machine washable, consider replacing them every year.
- 4. Exercise.** Regular exercise will help contribute to sounder sleep. However, do not exercise too close to bed time. A brisk walk 3-6 hours prior to bedtime can help promote sleep through a greater difference in your body temperature.
- 5. Settle into a regular bedtime routine.** This helps to signal your body that it is time for slumber.
- 6. Do not eat close to bedtime.** Spicy foods and too much liquid can disrupt your sleep.
- 7. Go to bed when you are tired.** Don't agonize over falling asleep. If you cannot fall asleep within the first 15 to 20 minutes, get up and do something else. Go back to bed when you are tired.
- 8. Use your bedroom only for sleep.** Bringing work and other issues into the bedroom can introduce anxiety and stress. Consider removing computers and televisions from your bedroom. Limit your time in bed to 20-30 minutes before and after sleep.
- 9. Avoid alcohol, caffeine and nicotine in the evening.** These items can keep you awake.
- 10. Sleep primarily at night.** Taking too many naps can disrupt your normal sleep pattern. However, if you had a bad prior night's sleep, a quick afternoon nap can assist with getting better sleep the next night. Keep the nap shorter than 45 minutes and before 3:00 P.M. Research shows a 10-minute nap can help avoid the mid-afternoon mood dip.
- 11. Make sure you have enough space.** Consider at least a queen mattress if two people are sleeping in the bed.
- 12. Get enough sleep.** Most people function best on six to eight hours of sleep. Trying to force yourself to sleep longer will not eliminate a sleep deficit. You can't force sleep.
- 13. Don't regularly take sleeping pills.** They can have side effects and inconsistent results.
- 14. Relax prior to sleeping.** Try flexibility exercises, yoga, mental imagery, a warm bath, or breathing techniques.

15. Don't worry. Focusing on sleep loss can exacerbate the problem. Calm your mind before going to bed. Keep a notepad on your nightstand and write things down that you need to do in order to free your mind.

16. Match bed time to sleep time. Staying awake as long as needed and only going to bed when you need to sleep will strengthen the sleep cycle.

17. Pay attention to cues. If you're nodding off, go to bed, even if it's before your normal bedtime. Pay attention to your internal cues (eyes closing) instead of external cues (always going to bed when the clock reads 11:00).

18. Keep a regular wake and sleep schedule. Even on the weekends. This helps your body develop a routine.

19. Minimize use of electronics at least one hour prior to bedtime. Cell phone, tablet, computer, and even television use can stimulate your brain and make it difficult to enter sleep.

[Click here](#) for a sleep tips sheet from the Better Sleep Council and the Council for Responsible Nutrition.

Better Sleep Tips for College Students

A study from the Journal of Adolescent Health revealed that just 30 percent of students get in their eight hours of sleep a night, the average requirement for young adults. And a study at Stanford University showed that 80% of students were seriously sleep deprived, racking up sleep “debt” from continual disruption of sleep patterns.

One reason for this is those all-nighters to cram for exams. 20% of college students stay up all night at least once a month, and 35% stay up past 3:00 am at least once a week. The result is that 12% of students who don't sleep well miss class three or more times a month or fall asleep in class. With lack of sleep comes health issues, including anxiety, a compromised immune system, and even weight gain.

Sleep education is key. Students need to understand how important sleep is to their overall health, both mental and physical. Here's what college students and their parents should know:

- **The body and brain work on a biological clock**, which causes us to have 24-hour fluctuations in temperature, hormones and many other physiological functions. This biological clock regulates a sleep and wakefulness cycle that provides signals to the brain. When the sleep cycle is interrupted, the biological clock gets out of whack. The body feels sleepy when it should be awake, and awake when it should be sleepy.
- **When you feel drowsy, get some sleep.** Drowsiness is the sign that you are about to fall asleep. Use the drowsy signal as a warning and don't fight it. Your health is more important than any activity that is taking you away from sleep. Imagine being drowsy when you are driving, this can be disastrous.

- **Sleep allows a shutdown of the neural processes that allow us to disengage from the environment.** In this state the body can rest and rejuvenate to prepare for the next waking time. When we have sufficient sleep, we are more awake, alert, and aware.

- **Understand that we need both a quantity of sleep, and a quality of sleep.** Sleep is both restorative and rejuvenating—your body requires deep sleep to function optimally.

To get a good night's sleep, try implementing these strategies:

- **As much as possible, stick to a regular sleep schedule.** Go to bed at the same time each night, and wake up at the same time each morning.

- **The room you sleep in should be dedicated to rest and sleep.** Study at the library, or in a different room other than where you have your bed. Keep electronics, like cell phones, televisions, and laptops, out of your sleeping room. Keep your room clutter free.

- **Be mindful of your sleep environment.** Keep the room cool and dark when you are sleeping. Make sure your mattress is in good condition and comfortable for you. Any mattress more than five-seven years old needs to be evaluated for wear. Use cotton linens because cotton is a more “breathable” fabric and it is more comfortable next to your skin.

- **What you do during the day affects how you sleep at night.** Exercise at least 30 minutes daily. And also be sure to get some sunshine every day. This helps the biological clock to determine the difference between waking hours and sleeping hours.

- **Maintain a healthy diet, including fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains.** Avoid caffeinated beverages and alcohol, especially in the hours before bedtime. Refrain from eating late-night snacks. When you eat too close to bedtime, your body is occupied digesting instead of settling down into sleep.

- **Get into a routine of “winding down” before sleep.** Take a warm bath or shower, and listen to relaxing music. Avoid stimulating activity like computer work.

By developing good sleep habits you'll find that you are healthier and happier. And an added benefit: A study from the College Student Journal reports a significant correlation between students who get sufficient sleep and higher grade point averages.

Parts of this article were contributed from Today's Parent.