

A Healthy Sleep Routine

Do you struggle to sleep at night or have restless sleep? Poor sleep habits may contribute to a compromised immune system, increased irritability, and difficulty learning new information.

These tips will help you create a healthy sleep routine:

- ▶ **Set a schedule.** Go to bed and wake up at the same time, even on weekends. Allow for seven to nine hours of sleep every night.
- ▶ **Cut back on caffeine, sugar, and alcohol.** All of these substances may interfere with your sleep patterns. To manage their use:
 - Limit caffeine to early in the day. Keep in mind that some foods (such as chocolate) also contain caffeine.
 - Minimizing your sugar intake may make it easier to sleep. In addition, avoid eating anything in the two hours before bedtime.
 - Alcohol, which is high in sugar, is often a culprit for restless sleep. Stay within the recommended limit of one drink per day for women and two for men.
- ▶ **Exercise.** Physical activity will help manage stress and increase relaxation, both of which are key to a good night's sleep. Vigorous exercise is best done earlier in the day and no more than



four hours before you go to bed. If you feel tense or stiff before bed, try 10-15 minutes of light stretches.

- ▶ **Minimize screen time.** Put away your phone, tablet, or laptop at least an hour before bed. Instead of watching TV before you fall asleep, try reading or writing in a journal instead.
- ▶ **Create a sleep-friendly environment.** Use an air conditioner or fan to keep your room cool and drown out noise or other distractions. Consider investing in a memory foam pillow, weighted blanket, or new mattress or mattress topper. Other options include using a sleep app or playing some soothing music.

Physical changes as you age and medical conditions such as depression or anxiety may have an impact on your ability to sleep. If you continue to struggle, contact your doctor or call LifeMatters. Help is available 24/7/365.

Source: Life Advantages, LLC

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