



# 8 tips for a better night's sleep

Please choose three behaviors from the list below to focus on throughout the Snooze Control program, then keep track of those behaviors on the Snooze Control Excel tracker.

## 1 Create a sleep environment.

The bedroom should be a haven for sleep. To create a pleasant and relaxing environment conducive to rest, consider these tips:

- Set your thermostat to a cool temperature. The suggested bedroom temperature for sleep is between 60 and 67 degrees Fahrenheit.
- To block outside light, try using thick curtains or room-darkening shades.
- Ensure that your bed, sheets and pillow are comfortable.
- Consider replacing your mattress every seven years or so, and replacing your pillows once a year.
- If you have a partner, make sure that your bed has plenty of space for both of you.
- If you have noisy neighbors, or live on a high-traffic street, you may need to try using a sound machine, turning on a fan or wearing earplugs to block outside noise.
- Keep the bedroom tidy. Make your bed each morning, put dirty clothes in the hamper and only leave out objects that you use daily, storing everything else out of sight.

# 2 Turn off electronics before bed.

Are you in the habit of checking your emails before turning in for the night? Do you enjoy playing a game on your tablet to relax at the end of the day? Is your favorite television show on right before you go to bed?

You may be disappointed to hear it, but these activities may actually be keeping you from a good night's sleep. One reason is because these activities can be mentally stimulating. The bigger issue, though, is the blue light that these electronics emit. That bright light can block the production of melatonin, a hormone that helps control your sleep cycles. If you are looking to catch some z's, it is recommended that you keep technology at bay before bed. (Note that technology can also interrupt your children's sleep, so set curfews on electronic devices for them as well.)



Here are some suggestions for keeping technology from disrupting your sleep:

- Have a technology curfew. For example, turn off all electronics at least 30 minutes before bed.
- Record favorite TV shows so you don't watch them around bedtime.
- Keep the TV out of the bedroom.
- Use an old-school alarm clock instead of your phone to wake yourself up each morning, and position it so that you can't easily read the time from your bed.
- Put your phone on silent so you don't continually hear the ding of new emails or texts throughout the night.
- If you absolutely must check your emails prior to bed, dim the brightness setting on your phone or computer.
- If you like to read before bed, do so outside the bedroom, opt for a non-backlit eReader or old-school hardback or paperback book and read under a dim light.

# 3 Use your bed for sleep only.

Reserving your bed for sleep may improve the quality of your sleep. Here are a few tips:

- Try to avoid working or using technology while in bed.
- If you're having trouble falling asleep, get out of bed and try something relaxing until you feel sleepy. If your mind is whirling with things that need to get done, try writing a to-do list that you can pick up the next morning.

- Although you may enjoy cuddling with your pet, the bed is not the best place to do it. An animal takes up valuable space and can disrupt your sleep. Keep the dog in their own bed next to yours or in a crate.



# 4 Avoid alcohol near bedtime and do not smoke.

## Alcohol

Although alcohol may help you fall asleep, it is not conducive to getting a good night's rest. Here are a few reasons why:

- Use of alcohol may prevent you from falling into the deeper stages of sleep.
- Alcohol may worsen symptoms of restless leg syndrome.
- Alcohol can cause you to snore by relaxing the muscles in your throat.

\*Moderate drinking means no more than one drink a day for women and no more than two for men. Some people should drink less or not use alcohol at all. If you have questions about alcohol use – or have difficulty drinking in moderation – talk with your doctor.

## Smoking

Smoking negatively affects your health in many ways, and causes one in five deaths per year. If you are a smoker and have trouble sleeping, this is one more reason to quit. Obstructive sleep apnea, a disorder where breathing repeatedly stops and starts during sleep, can be worsened by smoking. Also, nicotine is a stimulant, which may make it difficult to fall asleep at night.

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## 5 Reduce caffeine intake.

Caffeine is a stimulant, and people who are sensitive to it may find it difficult to fall asleep at night if they consume it late in the day. The majority of caffeine intake in the U.S. comes through coffee, tea and soda, but there are other sources of caffeine, such as chocolate, that you may need to avoid before bedtime. Here are a few tips:

- Consume caffeine earlier in the day. The effects of caffeine could take up to seven hours to wear off, so keep that in mind if you find you are sensitive to it.
- If caffeine seems to affect your sleep, slowly decrease the amount of that you consume. For example, aim to consume one less cup of caffeinated beverage per day every week.
- Switch to decaf coffee. If you truly love the taste of coffee, this is a way to enjoy that cup of java without the effects of caffeine.
- Try a caffeine-free herbal tea, such as chamomile.



### Sources:

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## 6 Exercise regularly.\*

Did you know that not getting enough exercise can contribute to sleep disturbances, and that regular exercise may help you sleep better and feel less sleepy during the day? Just remember, though, that moderate or vigorous exercise may get you amped up if you do it too close to bedtime.

The recommended amount of physical activity for most healthy adults is at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week, 75 minutes of vigorous activity or a combination of both. And, at least two days per week, people should aim to do strengthening activities that work the major muscle groups.

But getting even a little physical activity is better than getting none at all — even if it's in small chunks. Need ideas to get yourself up and out of the chair so you're sitting less and moving more? Here are a few:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.
- Park farther away from buildings, or walk or ride your bike to go to work or to run errands.
- Take a walking break rather than a coffee break. You can even take your brew with you. When you take a business call at work, stand up while you're talking.
- If you need to talk to a coworker, do it in person rather than by phone or email.
- Walk or stand while watching your children's sporting events.
- Do a few quick activities, like squats or stretches, during TV commercial breaks.
- Take a Sunday walk instead of a Sunday drive.
- Try a new hobby — just make sure it's active!

\*Note: Talk with your doctor before starting an exercise program or increasing your activity level. He or she can tell you what types and amounts of activities are safe and suitable for you.

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# 7 Avoid heavy meals right before bed.

Did you know that what you eat can have an effect on how well you sleep? Here are a few tips:

- Large, high-fat, acidic or spicy meals may cause acid reflux, which in turn can make getting to sleep more difficult.
- It is not good to go to bed hungry, but you should avoid heavy meals close to your bedtime. If you find your stomach growling before sleep, try a cup of warm milk.

- Eating a balanced diet can lead to improved energy during the day and contribute to better sleep. A nutritious eating plan includes:
  - Increasing your fruit and vegetable intake — especially dark green, red and orange vegetables
  - Consuming more whole grains, as well as fat-free or low-fat milk and dairy products
  - Choosing a variety of proteins, including seafood, lean meat and poultry, eggs, beans and unsalted nuts
  - Limiting saturated fat, trans fat, salt and added sugars

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# 8 Establish a bedtime routine.

If you have trouble falling asleep at night, establishing a bedtime routine might help. What you add to your routine is up to you, but establishing a particular order to your routine and sticking with it will help your routine become a habit and part of a good night's sleep. Here are some tips:

- Go to bed and get up at the same times every day — even on weekends. Set a bedtime that allows you to get at least seven hours of sleep, and avoid hitting the snooze button when your alarm goes off in the morning.
- Try taking a warm bath before bed.

- Relax by doing some simple stretches or yoga poses.
- Try relaxation techniques like deep breathing or meditation.
- Try reading a book, listening to music or engaging in another quiet pastime.



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