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Healthy sleep guidelines

How many hours of sleep should you get?

This differs depending on your age and between individuals. The optimal duration is largely determined by hereditary. However, large surveys show the average sleep duration for an adult is about 7 to 8 hours. Technically, sleep specialists agree the range you should aim for, for optimum sleep duration is 6.68-10 hours of sleep per night.

You can experiment with different durations. Healthy sleep is sleep which restores and energizes a person, so he or she feels wide awake, dynamic and energetic all day long.

Tips to improve your quality of sleep

1. **Establish a regular sleep schedule, even on the weekends.** Going to sleep and waking up at the same time daily is important for stabilizing your internal biological clock, allowing you to fall asleep and maintain uninterrupted sleep. Restorative sleep not only depends on duration and depth of sleep, but also continuity.
2. **Allow yourself to take a nap if you're tired.** Don't take naps too late or naps longer than 30 minutes.
3. **Stay away from alcohol late in the day.** Alcohol is a sedative, which can help induce sleep, however, it will cause more fragmented sleep and awakenings during the night. Alcohol can also worsen snoring and other sleep breathing problems.
4. **Create a caffeine cut off time.** Caffeine is a central nervous system stimulator. It prolongs sleep latency, reduces total sleep time and sleep efficiency, and worsens perceived sleep quality. Slow-wave sleep (deep sleep) is typically reduced, whereas wakefulness, transitional stage of sleep and arousals are increased. This sensitivity differs between individuals (also hereditary), thus some may find they can consume caffeine later in the day and still sleep well at night.

5. **Get regular exercise.** Physical exercise is considered an effective, non-pharmacological approach to improve sleep. Exercise helps you fall asleep faster, attain a higher percentage of restorative deep sleep, and awaken less often during the night.
6. **Don't eat a heavy meal late in the day.** Try to avoid a high fat/spicy meal close to bed time. A light snack with protein and slow releasing carbohydrates before bedtime is fine. Good snacks include:
 - Yoghurt with fruit
 - Whole wheat bread with lean meat/cheese
 - A glass of milk
 - Use Protein XTR at least 30 minutes before bed.
7. **Make your bedroom comfortable, quiet, and not too warm or cold.** Use comfortable, inviting bedding. Your bedroom should also be free from any noise that can disturb your sleep. This includes a bed partner's sleep disruptions such as snoring. Consider using, eye shades, ear plugs, "white noise" machines, humidifiers, fans and other devices. The ideal bedroom temperature is 16-20 °C.
8. **Use low light before bed.** For some people, using an electronic device such as a laptop can make it hard to fall asleep, because the particular type of light emanating from the screens of these devices is activating to the brain. If you have trouble sleeping, avoid electronics before bed, especially in the middle of the night if you struggle to fall asleep. You can also consider using blackout curtains to help keep the room as dark as possible
9. **Avoid using your bedroom for activities other than winding down before sleeping and sleep.** Avoid using your bedroom for work, studying or general recreation like watching tv.

Remember to follow these additional tips if you have difficulty sleeping:

- ✓ Turn off electronics and rotate your clock away from you (don't watch the clock or check your phone if you can't sleep). Try not to worry if you can't fall asleep.
- ✓ If you are awake for more than 20 minutes in bed, move to a different part of the house (one without bright lights). Do something relaxing for a while (like reading), until you begin to feel tired and go back to bed.