

Sleeping Restfully Fact Sheet

HS04-002D (10-21)

About one in four Americans report difficulty falling or staying asleep each year, according to a University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine [study](#).¹ These sleep issues, known as **insomnia**, have far-reaching negative effects on focus, productivity, and mood. Fortunately, there are many things a person can do to improve their sleep. The first step requires some personal detective work. An individual must investigate whether there is a connection between their sleep and other personal habits such as diet, exercise patterns, sleeping environment, work hours, lifestyle, or other current concerns. For example, links may appear between what or when a person eats and the quality of their sleep. Discovering these connections can help people with sleep difficulties develop a personalized sleep plan.



Tips for a Better Night's Sleep

Want better sleep? Try the following:

- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and cigarettes, especially before going to bedtime.
- Drink less fluids before going to bed.
- Eat healthy meals at regular intervals, but avoid heavy meals close to bedtime.
- Exercise regularly, but not before bedtime.
- Keep electronic devices off at least an hour before going to bed.
- Consider a relaxing routine, like soaking in a hot tub before bedtime.
- Develop a bedtime routine of going to bed and getting up at the same time every day, even on days off.
- Make the bedroom as dark and quiet as possible. Use heavy, dark curtains, blinds, or a sleep mask to keep light out. Reduce noise by adding carpet or using earplugs.
- Most people sleep better in a cool room. Consider lowering the air conditioner or using a fan, which can also create white noise to cancel sound.
- Turn off the phone and electronic notifications before bedtime.
- Ask family members to use headphones when listening to music or watching the television.

- Keep a sleep diary to track which tips improve sleep and share it with a medical professional, if needed.

Steps for Successful Daytime Sleep

The key to successful daytime sleep – vital for night shift workers -- is to make it a priority. These steps can help prepare the body and the mind :

- Wear wraparound dark glasses on the way home to keep sunlight from activating the body's internal daytime clock.
- Follow bedtime rituals and keep a regular sleep schedule even on weekends and days off.
- Go to sleep as soon as possible after work.
- Ask family and friends to help create a quiet and peaceful setting for those who must sleep during the day. Encourage family members to use headphones with electronics and avoid vacuuming, washing dishes, or playing noisy games during a person's sleep time.
- Put a "Do Not Disturb" sign on the front door so delivery people and friends do not knock or ring the doorbell.
- Schedule household repairs after sleep hours.



When to Seek Medical Help

Contact a physician if sleep disturbances:

- last more than four weeks;
- interfere with work or personal activities or relationships;
- include symptoms of sleep apnea, such as waking up and gasping for air;
- begin when a new medication is prescribed;
- result from pain or nerve sensations including uncomfortable, crawling sensations in the legs or excessive heartburn; or
- go along with changes in mood, energy, or appetite that may be associated with clinical depression.

Individuals should seek emergency care if they experience:

- worsening pain or difficulty breathing during sleep; or
- worsening mood or agitation that results in suicidal, homicidal, or other dangerous thoughts.

For more information, download or stream any of DWC's free [safety and health publications](#) or [workplace safety videos](#).

Reference

¹ Perelman School of Medicine. University of Pennsylvania, "One in Four Americans Develop Insomnia Each Year: 75 Percent of Those with Insomnia Recover." June 5, 2018, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/06/180605154114.htm>. Accessed October 21, 2021.



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