

8 Tips for Better Sleep at Night

Find out how establishing a wind down routine can help keep sleep patterns in sync.

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Establishing a routine that recognizes the body's natural response to light and dark can help keep your circadian rhythms in sync. Here are some expert-recommended strategies to move toward optimal circadian health.

1. Stick to a Sleep/Wake Schedule

Try to maintain a consistent sleepwake cycle (and thus a consistent dark-light cycle) by going to sleep and getting up at the same time every day. Try not to deviate more than an hour on weekdays, and more than two hours on weekends.

2. Consider the Quality of Light

Get as much daylight exposure as possible during the daytime. If natural light is not available, you can use bright, blue-enriched white light bulbs indoors. Sleep in the dark, at night, or wear an eye mask to block light from reaching the eyes.

3. Create Natural Wind-Down Lighting Between Dusk and Dark

Just as the sun goes down, you can mimic that fading light by minimizing bright light and moving toward a warmer orange light, which promotes sleep, ideally three hours before going to bed.

4. Pay Attention to Your Nighttime Light

Any light tells the brain it's daytime, encouraging alertness, and suppresses melatonin, the hormone that tells the brain that it's night. If needed, use a dim red-orange night light in the hall or bathroom.

5. Sleep at Night

Focus on getting all the sleep you need at night, so you don't need a nap during the day. If you need to nap, make it short—no more than 20 minutes.

6. Eat Smarter

Avoid eating three hours before bedtime. Ideally, you want to consume more of your calories in the daytime when your metabolism is most active.

7. Practice Screen Hygiene

Dim the lights and don't use screens within two hours of bedtime. The blue light emitted from TV, tablets, phones, and computers can have a delayed, negative effect on your sleep, even with the use of apps or eyeglasses that block blue light.

8. Establish a Wind-Down Routine

Create a transition time that separates day from night. Do something relaxing before bed, such as breathing exercises or yoga. This is a good way to calm the mind and body.