

a good night's sleep



Getting a good night's sleep can make everything seem better. Sleep helps your mind and body prepare for life's everyday challenges. You also need sleep for your overall health and well-being.

Do You Have Trouble Sleeping?

We all have trouble sleeping now and then. A change in routine, stress, travel, health issues, or worry can disrupt your sleep.

Think about your sleep pattern. Do you:

- Have trouble falling asleep (take more than 30 minutes to fall asleep)?
- Have trouble staying asleep?
- Wake up too early and can't go back to sleep?

Does your trouble sleeping affect you during your normal waking hours? Are you sleepy? Do you have a hard time focusing? Are you cranky?

If you have one or more of the sleep problems listed and the effects carry over to your day, you may have insomnia. Chronic insomnia means your sleep problems last longer than 3 months.

Insomnia can lead to health concerns:

- **Weight gain.** Less sleep means less energy. A lack of sleep can make it harder to stay away from unhealthy foods. Getting enough sleep can help you lose weight.
- **Memory loss.** Even one night of poor sleep can cause forgetfulness. As the nights of poor sleep add up, so does your memory loss.
- **Problems with daily life.** A night of poor sleep can lead to a day that leaves you feeling cranky, anxious, and less able to handle stress. You may feel less productive at work, drive less safely, have more trouble managing your weight, and have a lower sex drive.

How Much Sleep Do You Need?

Most adults need about 7 to 8 hours of sleep. Each of us needs a different amount of sleep to feel rested.

How much sleep do you need to feel your best? _____ hours

Stages of Normal Sleep

While you are resting, your brain is active. The brain goes through several stages during sleep. Each has a different purpose, from gathering memory to healing the body. You also wake up briefly about every 90 minutes as the brain shifts through these stages.

What Can You Do About Sleeplessness?

There are many changes you can make to help you get a better night's rest without using sleep medicines. Coming up with an action plan and practicing new sleep skills over time will help you on your way to a great night's sleep.

Do You Take Sleep Medicines?

Using sleep medicines for a short time can help you get through a hard time. However, when used over long periods, they do not work as well and can have side effects. If you are ready to stop or reduce your use of sleeping pills, talk to your physician about how to do it safely.



Think Well About Sleep

The way you think affects how you feel and what you do. Negative thoughts make you worry more about sleep and make it hard to relax. Relaxation is the key to sleep. Try changing negative thoughts to more positive ones.

Negative Thought		Positive Thought
I can't fall asleep.	→	I can relax and let sleep come naturally.
I'll never fall back to sleep.	→	I always fall back to sleep sooner or later.
If I don't sleep, I'll feel lousy all day tomorrow.	→	My bed is comfortable and inviting.
I have too much on my mind!	→	My mind is calm and peaceful now.
I can't sleep; I have too much to do!	→	I enjoy the deep relaxation and peacefulness of sleep.

You can change your way of thinking! You can teach yourself to think positively. It takes commitment, practice, and patience.

Write down a negative thought you often have about sleep.

Rewrite the thought into a positive message that is right for you.

Read and repeat this positive message. It can help you stop negative thinking and change your attitude and behavior about sleep.

Sleep Hygiene

Sleep hygiene refers to things you do that can affect how well you sleep.

Your Sleep Environment

- Keep the room dark. Use an eye mask if your room is too light.
- Keep your bedroom a little cooler than the rest of your house.
- Make your bed as cozy as possible. Use the right kind of pillow for you.
- White noise (background noise that blocks out bothersome sounds) from a fan, air conditioner, or a white noise machine masks noise and may be relaxing to the brain.
- Use ear plugs to help reduce noise, such as a partner's snoring.
- Try a larger bed, different mattress, or separate beds if a partner's movements disturb your sleep.
- Keep electronics out of your bed. Cell phones, tablets, laptops, and TV emit a blue light that can interfere with the sleep hormone.

What are you willing to do to change your sleep environment?



Daily Habits That Can Affect Your Quality of Sleep

- **Alcohol.** Alcohol may make you feel sleepy, but it keeps you from getting restful sleep. It can cause you to wake up in the middle of the night or very early morning, when it is harder to get back to sleep. Avoid alcohol at least 4 hours before bedtime.
- **Caffeine late in the day.** Caffeine stays in the body at least 6 hours but can remain much longer in some people. Caffeine is in many foods and drinks—coffee, chocolate, teas, sodas, energy drinks, and supplements. Check labels and limit caffeine to the early part of your day.
- **Naps.** Long naps interrupt your body’s natural rhythms and can make it hard to fall asleep at bedtime. If you must nap, limit it to no more than 20 minutes. Try not to nap after 3 p.m.
- **Eating or drinking too close to bedtime.** Digestion slows during sleep. Heavy meals can cause discomfort and heartburn, which can wake you up. Too much liquid close to bedtime can make you go to the bathroom during the night. Stay away from food and drinks (except small sips of water) 2 to 3 hours before bedtime.
- **Active exercise too close to bedtime.** Physical activity raises body temperature and alertness, making it harder to fall asleep.
- **Nicotine.** Nicotine is a stimulant. Quitting or cutting back on smoking will improve sleep. Try not to smoke before bedtime or when you wake up during the night. See the resources section for a program to help you quit smoking.



Daily Habits That Can Help a Good Night's Sleep

Check off things you can try:

- Set a bedtime routine.** A routine can help train your body to know when it is time to sleep. Each night, get ready for bed about the same time, turn off the TV and computer, brush your teeth, take a few deep breaths, and think a happy thought. Get up at the same time every day, even on your days off. If you work the night shift, talk to your physician about a plan that works best for you.
- Make your bedroom peaceful.** Keep your bills, the news, your worries, and to-do list away from your bedroom.
- Quiet your mind.** Relax before bed with deep breathing or guided imagery. Start a gratitude journal to focus on things you love.
- Get out of bed if you can't sleep.** Do something relaxing in another room. When you feel sleepy, go back to bed.
- Turn the clock away from you.** Watching the clock can increase anxiety. Even a small amount of light from a clock can interrupt sleep. Don't use your cell phone as an alarm clock so you can avoid the temptation to check email or social media.
- Check all your medicines.** Some medicines can disrupt sleep. Ask your physician about changing the dose or time you take them.
- Exercise.** Moderate physical activity at least 4 times a week can help you fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer. Exercise helps, but make sure to do it 3 hours or more before bedtime. Gentle stretches, deep breathing, or yoga can help you relax before bedtime.

Get Support to Manage Stress

Feeling stressed is one of the most common causes of insomnia. Make time to take care of yourself. Get support from friends and family to help manage your stress and keep you calm. See the resources section for more support.

Check off nurturing activities that you enjoy:

- Spending time with family or friends
- Reading a good book
- Working in the garden
- Listening to music
- Working on a hobby
- Eating balanced meals
- Playing with pets or children
- _____
- _____



What support will you find to help manage your stress?

Track Your Daily Habits

Keep a log of your habits to help you see patterns that may affect your sleep. Once you know which habits are keeping you from getting quality sleep, you can decide where to start.

Your Commitment to Change

There are no easy or instant cures for insomnia. Getting better sleep means changing your habits every day. Most people have better success when they change one thing at a time. Try a tip and give it time to work. Keep trying, and you will sleep better and without sleeping pills!

Personal Action Plan

Action plans are short-term plans that can help you reach your goal of getting restful sleep. Writing an action plan improves your chances of success. Your plan must answer the questions:

- **What** are you going to do?
- **How much** are you going to do?
- **When** are you going to do it?
- **How many** days of the week are you going to do it?

Example:

This week I will turn off the TV (*what*) 20 minutes (*how much*) before I go to bed (*when*) each work night (*how many*).

This week I will:

_____ (*what*)
_____ (*how much*)
_____ (*when*)
_____ (*how many*)

How confident are you that you will succeed with your plan?



0 = not at all confident

10 = totally confident

Your confidence should be 7 or higher.

When you are successful, celebrate! Reward yourself with something to feel good about taking care of yourself.

When to Get Help

In some cases, health issues may be the cause of sleep problems. If you snore loudly or wake up gasping for breath, you may have sleep apnea, a serious sleep disorder that needs to be checked by your physician. If you have other health conditions, such as heartburn, chronic pain, depression, or substance abuse, talk to your physician about how to manage them.

Resources

Kaiser Permanente Healthy Living Programs

Kaiser Permanente offers many resources to help you live healthier. **Sleep Well, Live Well** is a four-session program designed to help you improve your sleep. Visit kp.org/classes or call your local Health Education Department for more information.

Wellness Coaching by Phone

Whether you need support to quit tobacco or manage your weight, you can work with a wellness coach by phone to set goals for healthy, lasting change. Together, you'll build a plan of action tailored just for you! Sessions are offered in English and Spanish at no charge to Kaiser Permanente members. To schedule an appointment with a coach, call **1-866-862-4295** between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., Monday through Friday.



Kaiser Permanente Online Resources

- **kp.org/sleep**
- Visit **kp.org/healthylifestyles** for personalized online programs:
 - **Dream** can help you develop an action plan to improve sleep
 - **Relax** can help you reduce stress
 - **Care for Depression** can help you manage depression
- Listen to gentle yet powerful guided imagery exercises about sleep, relaxation and wellness, stress, and self-confidence at **kp.org/listen**.

The following resources are offered by organizations outside of Kaiser Permanente. Kaiser Permanente is not responsible for any fees or costs associated with them.

Other Online Resources

- American Academy of Sleep Medicine: **sleepeducation.com**
- National Sleep Foundation: **sleepfoundation.org**

Free Smartphone Apps

- **Sleep as Android**, by Urbandroid Team
- **Sleep Tracker**, by UEVO, LLC
- **Calm—Meditate, Sleep, Relax**, by Calm.com, Inc.
- **Relax Lite: Stress Relief**, by Saagara

Books

- *The Harvard Medical School Guide to a Good Night's Sleep*, by Lawrence Epstein, MD, and Steve Mardon
- *The Promise of Sleep: A Pioneer in Sleep Medicine Explores the Vital Connection Between Health, Happiness, and a Good Night's Sleep*, by William C. Dement, MD, PhD, and Christopher Vaughan
- *Sound Sleep, Sound Mind: 7 Keys to Sleeping Through the Night*, by Barry Krakow, MD

