



Optimizing Your Sleep Opportunity

You have crawled into bed, shut off the lights, and closed your eyes. You are tired from the day's activities.

Now why in the world can you not fall asleep? Or why do you keep waking up throughout the night? Your behaviors during the day and routine before bedtime might be influencing your ability to fall and stay asleep. Health professionals recommend establishing several pre-sleep habits to improve your ability to fall asleep and enjoy restful sleep.

Consistent Sleep/Wake Schedule: Try to go to bed and get up at approximately the same time each day. This includes on weekends, holidays, and vacations.

Relaxing Bedtime Routine: Start getting ready for sleep 20-30 minutes before you intend to fall asleep. Establish a routine which helps you relax and unwind. The routine might include a warm bath, listening to soothing music, reading a book, brushing/flossing teeth, or writing in a journal.

Turn Off Screens: Avoid screens at least 30 minutes before bedtime. This will limit exposure to bright lights which can activate the brain. You should also turn off the sound/vibration on your phone before you go to sleep.

Be Active: Exercising most days of the week promotes restful sleep. Be mindful that exercising immediately before bedtime may disrupt the ability to fall asleep for some people. Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity per day, but never sacrifice sleep for exercise and don't exercise too close to bedtime.

Avoid Alcohol & Caffeine: Start to wind down any intake of alcohol and caffeine by late afternoon or evening. Caffeine interferes with adenosine, a sleep-inducing chemical in the body and may work to keep us from falling asleep. Alcohol disrupts rapid eye movement (REM) sleep and can leave you feeling groggy, sluggish, and not well rested even after a sufficient quantity of sleep.

Be Wary of Naps: If you are finding it hard to get a good night's sleep, consider cutting out naps. While a catnap might rejuvenate you in the afternoon, it may impact your ability to fall asleep and stay asleep later.

Effectively Manage Light: Unless you work the night shift, try to get plenty of natural light during the day. Then, keep things dark at night. This supports the circadian rhythm, the internal clock that regulates your wake-sleep cycle.

Set The Stage For Sleep: Your bedroom should promote good sleep – make it quiet and relaxing. Keep the room at a comfortable and cool temperature (anywhere between 60-67 degrees F is recommended). Use blackout curtains to keep light out. Try a sleep mask, sound machine, or a fan, if necessary.

Say 'No' to Pets: While sleeping with pets can be comforting, they often disrupt sleep generating heat and moving frequently.

QUICK TIP: Use these strategies during the challenge to see if they can help you improve YOUR sleep quality!