

# Tips for Better Rest

## Meditation

Get comfortable, settle down, close your eyes and concentrate on a single face, place, color, etc. Allow your mind to clear and focus on a single image.

## Don't eat after dinner

In general wait 2-3 hours between your last meal and bedtime. This allows digestion to occur.

## No electronics in the bedroom

TVs, tablets, smartphones, laptops, or other electronic devices delay your body's internal clock, suppress the release of the melatonin, and makes it more difficult to fall asleep. Using these devices delays the onset of REM sleep, reduces the total amount of REM sleep, and compromises alertness the next morning. Over time, this can add up to a significant, chronic deficiency in sleep.

## Snoring can be a sign of sleep apnea - Have it checked out

Sleep apnea is a common disorder in which breathing repeatedly stops and starts as you sleep. It can leave you feeling exhausted during the day, affect your mood and your relationship with your bed partner, and even be dangerous to your health.

## Caffeine after 2pm can make it hard for you to fall asleep at night

One study found that consuming caffeine 6 hours before bedtime reduced total sleep time by 1 hour. These effects also can be stronger in older adults. It takes their bodies a longer time to process caffeine.

## Try a self-guided online course such as Path to Better Sleep

Path to Better Sleep is a self-managed cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-i) designed for veterans with many resources including a Sleep Checkup.

## Exercise regularly

Exercise can contribute to more sound and restful sleep. Physical activity increases time spent in deep sleep, the most physically restorative sleep phase. Deep sleep helps to boost immune function, support cardiac health, and control stress and anxiety.

## Bedrooms should be cool, dark and quiet

The ideal bedroom temperature for sleeping is around 65 degrees Fahrenheit. A room that's too warm or too cool can disrupt comfortable sleep. The less light the more likely you are to fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer. The wrong noise (like your neighbor's yapping dog) will keep you up at night, other sounds (such as crashing waves or the hum of an air conditioner) can lull you to sleep, and certain sounds can actually improve the quality of sleep (white noise, pink noise, instrumental music).

## Manage your stress

Overwork or being too busy during the day can also lead to stress and leave yourself with not enough time to get a good sleep. When your body is experiencing chronic stress, it thinks it's in a state of perpetual danger and that it shouldn't be sleeping!

