

# Sleep hygiene

The following sleep hygiene recommendations are intended to make you aware of the impact of your daytime habits (e.g., diet, activities) and certain environmental habits on your sleep.

## Close to bedtime ...

### Avoid:



### What to do instead:



Eat a light snack  
shortly before  
bedtime.



Get up at  
a regular time.



Exercise regularly  
as part of  
your routine.

## Diet

Did you know that what we eat and drink affects our sleep?

**To maximize your chances of getting a good night's sleep, try the following strategies:**

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If you tend to be hungry when you go to bed, have a light snack shortly before bedtime.

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However, avoid large meals, which prolong digestion and can cause discomfort during the night.

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Limit fluid intake (glasses of water or juice, tea, soups, etc.) to 1 cup (250 mL) within 4 hours of your bedtime to avoid having to get up often to go to the bathroom.

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Avoid eating if you wake up during the night.

## Nicotine

Although some people claim that cigarettes help them relax, the nicotine they contain is actually a stimulant of the central nervous system which has the same harmful effects as caffeine.

**Here are a few recommendations:**

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If you feel able, consider quitting smoking.

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Decrease your smoking shortly before bedtime.

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Do not smoke if you wake up during the night.

## Alcohol

Unlike caffeine and nicotine, alcohol slows down central nervous system activity and tends to speed up drowsiness. This is why some people use it to help them sleep. However, as alcohol is absorbed into the body, it has a tendency to fragment sleep, so that even if you fall asleep quickly, the quality of your sleep is not very good. This is why it is recommended to avoid alcoholic beverages 4 to 6 hours before bedtime.

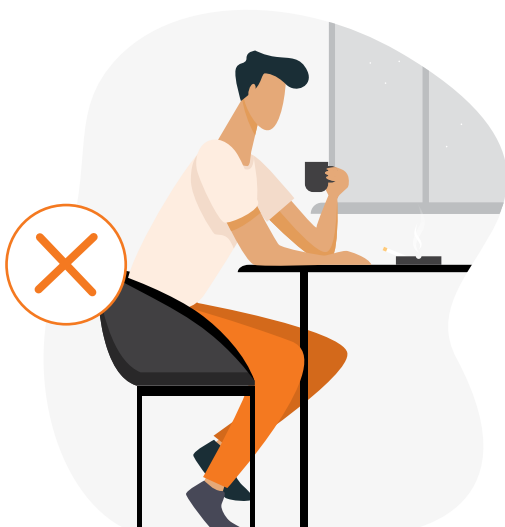
If your alcohol consumption has become a problem for you, please talk to your health care professional. There are several resources available to help you quit drinking or lower your consumption. Keep in mind, however, that alcohol withdrawal can also cause symptoms of insomnia which may take some time to subside. In such cases, cognitive-behavioural therapy can help people get through this period and maintain good sleep habits.

## Caffeine

Caffeine is a stimulant of the nervous system and is known for its powerful ability to prevent sleep. It remains active in the body several hours after consumption. Not all people have the same sensitivity to caffeine, but in all cases, it may be beneficial to evaluate and try to reduce the amount of caffeine you consume shortly before bedtime.

In general, it is recommended to limit caffeine consumption to the equivalent of 3 cups of regular coffee a day and to have your last coffee about 6 to 8 hours before bedtime (which means around 3 p.m. for a person going to bed at 10 p.m.).

Substances containing caffeine include coffee (regular, espresso, flavoured, etc.), tea (black or green), several soft drinks, energy drinks and chocolate. Why not take a look in your pantry and check the caffeine content of the products you regularly consume?



## Physical exercise

Sleep has several functions, including restoring the body's physical energy. This regeneration occurs particularly during the N3 stage of deep sleep. With physical activity, total sleep time, the number of N3 stages and their duration all tend to increase. In addition, physical activity decreases the time needed to fall asleep.

**However, the intensity and timing of the physical activity are important.**

Ideally, integrate regular physical exercise into your routine. It is not so much the fact of exercising on a given day that will make you sleep better at night, but rather the fact that you are regularly active.

The benefit will be even greater if you exercise in the afternoon or early evening.

However, avoid intense exercise just before bedtime.

## Regulate your sleep and build "sleep debt"

Use the circadian rhythm and homeostatic pressure to help you sleep better.

Get up at the same time every day, regardless of how long you slept the night before.

Use an alarm clock if you have trouble getting up in the morning.

You can get out of bed up to an hour later on weekends.

Try to limit naps during the day. If you absolutely need a nap, stick to a short nap no longer than 15 to 20 minutes, at least 7 to 9 hours before bedtime.

## Light and screens

The light emitted by computer screens, tablets, cellphones and televisions is similar to daylight, which can affect the circadian rhythm (sleep-wake cycle) by attenuating or delaying the biological phenomena that lead us to fall asleep at night.

**Also, it may be beneficial to try the following strategies:**

Dim the lights shortly before bedtime.

Avoid exposure to screens during the evening, especially if you tend to wake up at night.



## Relearn to associate your bed with sleep

**Limit the amount of time you spend in bed without sleeping** so that your bed, bedroom and bedtime become strongly associated with relaxation and sleep again.

Go to bed only when you feel sleepy (not just tired).

Your bedroom and bed should be places to relax and rest. Reserve the bed for sleep and sexual activities. Avoid activities that are incompatible with sleep (e.g., watching TV, doing your budget, arguing with your spouse, etc.).

If you are in bed and have not been able to fall asleep for several minutes, get up, go to another room for a relaxing activity and wait until you feel sleepy again before going back to bed.

## Sleep environment

The following are considered ideal conditions for a good night's sleep:

### Quiet

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If sounds disturb your sleep, it may be a good idea to improve the soundproofing of your bedroom, create background noise (e.g., a fan or white noise machine) or wear earplugs.

### Dark

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If light disturbs your sleep, add opaque curtains or blinds. A simple sleep mask can also do the trick!

### Cool

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There is no ideal temperature for everyone, but temperature extremes, whether hot or cold, can have a negative effect on sleep. If your bedroom is too cold, turn up the heat, dress more warmly or use a warmer blanket. If it is too hot, you can open the windows, use a fan or turn on the air conditioner.

Finally, if you tend to watch the clock when having trouble falling asleep, it is preferable to remove it or turn it away from you, since watching the time go by often adds stress that interferes with falling asleep.

**Restful nights.  
Satisfying days.**

