

DEVELOPING HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS

Sleep is essential to a healthy lifestyle. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 7 to 19 percent of adults have difficulty sleeping or do not get enough sleep at night. It is estimated that 50 million to 70 million Americans experience a sleep problem or sleep disorder. Poor sleeping habits can affect our ability to learn new tasks, and our performance at home and work. It can also affect our metabolism, stress levels, and even chronic diseases, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, and depression.

HOW MUCH SLEEP DO WE NEED?

Age Group		Recommended Hours of Sleep Per Day
Newborn	0–3 months	14–17 hours (National Sleep Foundation) No recommendation (American Academy of Sleep Medicine)
	4–12 months	12–16 hours per 24 hours (including naps)
Toddler	1–2 years	11–14 hours per 24 hours (including naps)
Preschool	3–5 years	10–13 hours per 24 hours (including naps)
School Age	6–12 years	9–12 hours per 24 hours
Teen	13–18 years	8–10 hours per 24 hours
Adult	18–60 years	7 or more hours per night
	61–64 years	7–9 hours
	65 years and older	7–8 hours

CREATE A HEALTHY SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

- Create a schedule that will allow 7 to 9 hours for sleep
- Go to bed and wake up at similar times every day, even on the weekends
- Develop a quiet bedtime routine: take a bath, read a book, or listen to relaxing music
- Make your bedroom a sanctuary for sleep: keep the room dark, hide the glow of electronics, keep the temperature cool, and use a fan or white noise machine
- Avoid screen time for an hour before bed

IMPROVING SLEEP THROUGH LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Individuals who maintain a regular exercise routine, even if it is just 10 minutes each day, experience better sleep compared to those who are not active. The timing of your workouts matter, though: Try to exercise at least three hours before bed so the energizing effects of physical activity do not keep you up at night. Not only will regular exercise improve your sleep, it can also help lower your risk for chronic diseases. The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise each week.

Poorly managed stress can be a barrier to healthful sleep. A study by the National Sleep Foundation found that nearly half of those who said they sleep poorly cited stress or worries as the number one reason for their sleep problems. To better manage stress, identify the main sources of stress in your life. Once you have identified your stressors, it is important to find ways to reduce the amount of stress, and find healthy ways to relax and unwind. Common techniques to use are deep breathing, guided imagery, and journaling.



Improvements made to nutrition can affect our sleep habits. Consider your consumption of caffeine — it may be a good idea to avoid caffeine in the afternoons because the effects of caffeine can last for six to eight hours. You may also want to reconsider the use of alcohol right before bed. Studies have shown that drinking alcohol too close to bedtime will initially help you fall asleep but will also result in a rebound effect that leaves you more likely to wake up throughout the night. Enjoying a healthy diet will play a role in improved sleep as well. Include plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, fiber, and whole grains in your meals and snacks. Avoiding excessive sugar and large meals right before bed can also be helpful.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For support from a registered nurse or wellness coach or to ask questions, please call a Blues On CallSM health coach at **1-888-BLUE-428**.

Log in to the member website listed on the back of your member ID card.

- Click on the **Wellness** tab.
- Click on **Additional Resources** on the left.
- Click on **Health Topics** under **WebMD health information** to search health topics or use the medical encyclopedia to review health issues you want to know more about.

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