

# Sleep tips for adults

**Good quality sleep is essential for your health and wellbeing.**

**It is important for healthy brain function and emotional wellbeing, physical health, energy and appetite regulation, healing and repair, immune system function, productivity, work performance and safety.**

Not sleeping enough, or sleeping badly, can affect your reaction times, increasing the risk of accidents around the home, at work, out and about and on the road. Researchers have also linked lack of sleep to depression, suicide and risk-taking behaviour, increased blood sugar levels, obesity, heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and stroke.



## How much sleep you need

The National Sleep Foundation recommends 7–9 hours of sleep a night for adults up to the age of 65, and 7–8 hours for those over 65. Some people naturally sleep slightly more or slightly less than these recommended hours.



## Ways to improve your sleep

### Bedtime routine

- Maintain a regular sleep pattern by going to bed and getting up at around the same time each day, including on the weekends.
- Relax and unwind before bed. Try to spend the last hour you're awake doing calming activities like reading, having a shower or bath or doing mindfulness activities.
- Don't watch the clock or stay in bed when you're wide awake. If you are still awake after 20–30 minutes of trying to get to sleep, try sitting in another room reading for a short time.
- Avoid sleeping pills unless your doctor or pharmacist recommends them. You should only use sleeping pills in the short term, or occasionally.

### Sleeping environment

- Keep your bedroom conducive for sleeping. Remove distractions like televisions and portable electronic devices from the room.
- Keep the bedroom quiet and dark, at a comfortable temperature. This is different for everyone, but generally falls within the range of 15–20°C. Make sure your bedding is comfortable too.

## During the day

- Keep active. Moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity is best, but even light activity during the day can help you sleep better at night. Try to avoid a lot of activity just before bedtime.
- Alcohol, caffeine and cigarettes can disrupt your sleep. Try to avoid these, and avoid eating large meals within 2–3 hours of going to bed.
- Daytime naps can affect your night-time sleep. Keep your daytime naps short (less than 30 minutes). Napping in front of TV in the evening will make it harder for you to get to sleep.
- Getting sunlight in the morning and avoiding bright lights in the evening can help your body to get into a better sleep routine.



## If you work night shifts

- If you regularly work night shifts, you may find it hard to get enough sleep during the day. In this case:
- try wearing dark sunglasses to reduce the sunlight on your commute home
- keep to the same daily routine if you can
- use ear plugs and eye masks to reduce noise and light in your bedroom
- use blackout curtains or put boards over the windows in your bedroom to block out sunlight
- avoid caffeinated drinks and food, and avoid alcohol close to bedtime
- having short naps can help.



## When to see a doctor

See your doctor if you:

- have persistent trouble sleeping and the recommendations set out here aren't helping
- wake a lot during the night
- consistently feel very tired during the day
- have trouble staying awake during the daytime
- snore severely.