SLEEPING SLUMBER

To make these sleep hygiene improvements more approachable, we've broken them into four categories:
- Creating a Sleep-Inducing Bedroom
- Optimizing Your Sleep Schedule
- Crafting a Pre-Bedtime Routine
- Fostering Pro-Sleep Habits During the Day

Creating a Sleep-Inducing Bedroom

An essential tip to help fall asleep quickly and easily is to make your bedroom a place of comfort and relaxation.
In designing your sleep environment, focus maximizing comfort and minimizing distractions, including with these tips:
- <u>Proper Mattress and Pillow</u>: A quality mattress and pillow is vital to making sure that you are comfortable enough to relax and it also ensures that the spine gets proper support to avoid aches and pains.
- <u>Choose Quality Bedding</u>: Your bedding plays a major role in making your bed inviting. Bedding should feel comfortable and help maintain a comfortable temperature.
- <u>Avoid Light Disruption</u>: Excess light exposure can throw off your sleep and circadian rhythm. Blackout curtains over your windows or a sleep mask for over your eyes can block light.
- <u>Cultivate Peace and Quiet</u>: Keeping noise to a minimum is an important part of building a sleep-positive bedroom. If you can't eliminate nearby sources of noise, consider drowning them out with a fan or white noise machine.
- <u>Find an Agreeable Temperature</u>: You don't want temperature to be a distraction by feeling too hot or too cold. Research supports sleeping in a cooler room, around 65 degrees.
- <u>Introduce Pleasant Aromas</u>: Essential oils, such as lavender, can provide a soothing smell for your bedroom.

Optimizing Your Sleep Schedule

Taking control of your daily sleep schedule is a powerful step toward getting better sleep. To start harnessing your schedule for your benefit, try implementing these four strategies:
- <u>Set a Fixed Wake-Up Time</u>: Pick a wake-up time and stick with it, even on weekends when you would be tempted to sleep in.
- <u>Budget Time for Sleep</u>: Considering your fixed wake-up time, work backwards and identify a target bedtime. Whenever possible, give yourself extra time before bed to wind down and get ready for sleep.
- <u>Be Careful with Naps</u>: If you nap for too long or too late in the day, it can throw off your sleep schedule and make it harder to get to sleep when you want to. The best time to nap is shortly after lunch and around 20 minutes.
- <u>Adjust Your Schedule Gradually</u>: When you need to change your sleep schedule, it's best to make adjustments little-by-little and over time with a maximum difference of 1-2 hours per night. This allows your body to get used to the changes so that following your new schedule is more sustainable.

Crafting a Pre-Bed Routine

If you have a hard time falling asleep, it's natural to think that the problem starts when you lie down in bed. The lead-up to bedtime plays a crucial role in preparing you to fall asleep quickly and effortlessly. As part of that routine, incorporate these three tips:
- <u>Wind Down For At Least 30 Minutes</u>: It's much easier to doze off if you are at-ease. Quiet reading, low-impact stretching, listening to soothing music, and relaxation exercises are examples of ways to get into the right frame of mind for sleep.
- <u>Lower the Lights</u>: Avoiding bright light can help you transition to bedtime and contribute to your body's production of melatonin, a hormone that promotes sleep.
- <u>Disconnect From Devices</u>: Tablets, cell phones, and laptops can keep your brain wired, making it hard to truly wind down. The light from these devices can also suppress your natural production of melatonin. As much as possible, try to disconnect for 30 minutes or more before going to bed.

Fostering Pro-Sleep Habits During the Day

Setting the table for high-quality sleep is an all-day affair. A handful of steps that you can take during the day can pave the way for better sleep at night.

- See the Light of Day: Sunlight has the strongest effect, so try to take in daylight by getting outside or opening up windows or blinds to natural light. Getting a dose of daylight early in the day can help normalize your circadian rhythm.
- Find Time to Move: Daily exercise has across-the-board benefits for health, and the changes it initiates in energy use and body temperature can promote solid sleep.
- Monitor Your Caffeine Intake: Caffeinated drinks, including coffee, tea, and sodas, are among the most popular beverages in the world. To avoid it affecting your sleep, keep an eye on your caffeine intake and avoid it later in the day when it can be a barrier to falling sleep.
- Be Mindful of Alcohol: Alcohol can induce drowsiness, so some people are keen on a nightcap before bed. Unfortunately, alcohol affects the brain in ways that can lower sleep quality, and for that reason, it's best to avoid alcohol in the lead-up to bedtime.
- Don't Eat Too Late: It can be harder to fall asleep if your body is still digesting a big dinner. To avoid food-based sleep disruptions, try to avoid late dinners and minimize especially fatty or spicy foods.
- Don't Smoke: Exposure to smoke, including secondhand smoke, has been associated with a range of sleeping problems including difficulty falling asleep and fragmented sleep.

If You Can't Fall Asleep

Whether it's when you first get into bed or after waking up in the middle of the night, you may find it hard to drift off to sleep. These tips help explain what to do when you can't sleep:

- Try Relaxation Techniques: Don't focus on trying to fall asleep; instead, focus on just trying to relax. Try controlled breathing, mindfulness meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, and guided imagery.
- Don't Stew in Bed: You want to avoid a connection in your mind between your bed and frustration from sleeplessness. This means that if you've spent around 20 minutes in bed without being able to fall asleep, get out of bed and do something relaxing in low light. Avoid checking the time during this time. Try to get your mind off sleep for at least a few minutes before returning to bed.
- Experiment with Different Methods: Sleeping problems can be complex and what works for one person may not work for someone else. As a result, it makes sense to try different approaches to see what works for you. Just remember that it can take some time for new methods to take effect, so give your changes time to kick in before assuming that they aren't working for you.
- Keep a Sleep Diary: A daily sleep journal can help you keep track of how well you're sleeping and identify factors that might be helping or hurting your sleep. If you're testing out a new sleep schedule or other sleep hygiene changes, the sleep diary can help document how well it's working.
- Talk with a Doctor: A doctor is in the best position to offer detailed advice for people with serious difficulties sleeping. Talk with your doctor if you find that your sleep problems are worsening, persisting over the long-term, affecting your health and safety (such as from excessive daytime sleepiness), or if they occur alongside other unexplained health problems.