



March

Member Newsletter

Sleep: The best tonic for well-being

Sleeping too little, too much, or barely at all? Sleep problems have surged thanks to pandemic-related factors like disrupted routines, too much screen time, and dissolving boundaries between work and home life. Whatever the reason, not getting the recommended 7 to 9 hours of quality sleep can set you up for obesity, diabetes, heart disease, depression and other physical and mental problems. The good news: You can start regulating your sleep now to reap the benefits of solid sleep for better well-being. **Try these tips:**

 **Stick to a daytime routine** that includes exercise, regular mealtimes, and exposure to sunlight—all help regulate your body's circadian rhythm.

 **Establish a good sleep/wake cycle.** Go to bed around the same time each night, but not until you feel sleepy. Wake up at the same time each day, even on weekends and vacations.

 **If you don't fall asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed.** Turn to a quiet activity without a lot of light exposure, but be sure to avoid using light-emitting electronic devices, such as such as smartphones, that can delay sleep onset.

 **If possible, avoid associating your bedroom with wakefulness.** Don't work, watch TV or use other digital entertainment in bed.

 **Reserve your bedroom for sleep and sex only.** If this is not feasible because your bedroom has become a multipurpose activity center during these challenging times, aim to leave it for extended periods when possible.

 **Keep the bedroom on the cool side, dark and quiet.** Use a white noise machine and room-darkening shades or a light-blocking eye mask.

 **Start a worry journal.** If ruminating thoughts keep you up, write them down before bed so they are kept “in their place” and not in your head. If possible, jot down a solution to what’s concerning you.

 **Sleep with your neck in a neutral position.** Bending it in any way, such as from lying on a too soft or too firm pillow, can be uncomfortable, awakening you or producing pain.



Despite following these suggestions, if sleep problems persist, talk to your healthcare practitioner.



Cultivating positive habits can help you overcome many of life's disappointments and get through tough situations

Mind-body habits to navigate challenges

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that life is full of speedbumps, upsetting our everyday routines, jobs, vacation plans and more—often stopping us in our tracks. However, cultivating positive habits—both in thought and action—can help you overcome many of life's disappointments and stoke the confidence, focus and energy to get through tough situations. **Try these suggestions.**

- 💡 Adopt the habit of saying “I can” and “I will” vs. “I can’t” or “I won’t.”** This simple self-talk tweak can boost your confidence and increase your chance of getting through many detours. Keeping reminders of your positive qualities and achievements handy can also help propel you forward.
- 🧭 Rely on your previous “survival skills.”** For example, did you call on friends, experts, community or online practical resources to help you through the loss of a job, tackle debt, secure caregiving for a family member or ease another stressful situation? Reaching out for help can prompt you to take the next steps to handle new challenges.



Streamline your routines for better balance.

Disruptions to work or school schedules, for example, can be overwhelming, throwing off other parts of your life. Consider pre-planning simple, nutritious go-to meals for the week, for example, so you're not flooded with last-minute decisions.



Practice mindfulness. Focusing your mind on your breath and the present moment—even for a few minutes a day here and there—allows you to calm your emotional reactions, enabling you to rationally find solutions to challenges.



Stick to healthy lifestyle habits. Getting a solid night's sleep, exercising daily, and eating nutritious meals can help sustain your resilience.



Tap your network of supportive people. Seek out the optimists who cheer you on. Limit time with the naysayers and complainers.

Is your diet keeping you up at night?

We all know sleep is important and necessary, yet we don't often think about how our habits while we're awake influence our quality of sleep. Many things can prevent you from getting a good night's sleep, including your eating habits! These tips can help you determine if your diet is keeping you up at night and what you can do to fix it.



Avoid eating too close to bedtime. Eating too close to bedtime can cause disruptions in your sleep, especially if you have indigestion. If you wake up at night with your esophagus burning, you may want to try these ideas to sleep better:

- Do not eat within 4 hours of bedtime
- Avoid eating foods that trigger your indigestion before bed
- Sleep propped up to keep the acid from creeping up your throat

Kick the caffeine—it can cause a restless night! If you have trouble with caffeine before bed:

- Avoid caffeinated beverages like soda, coffee or tea
- Reduce your consumption of foods with caffeine such as chocolate
- Be aware that it takes 8 hours for your body to fully process 8 ounces of coffee from your body

Ditch the sugary foods. Consuming foods with sugar may help prevent you from sleeping. If you're a dessert-after-dinner person:

- Try eating fruit. The natural sugar of fruit can satisfy your sweet tooth
- Only enjoy it on special occasions. Avoid indulging in it every day.

Avoid alcohol. If you want to get the deep sleep required for restorative rest, it might be best to stick with non-alcoholic beverages.



Despite following these suggestions, if sleep problems persist, talk to your healthcare practitioner.

For more help, talk to Health Advocate, your health practitioner or a licensed counselor.

Nutrition Month



Erratic mealtimes, filling up on snack foods or the latest diet trend can derail you from eating healthfully. This month is a great time to reset and focus on having a well-rounded diet—the key to both good nutrition and better well-being. And, it doesn't have to be complicated, time-consuming or boring! To learn simple ways to help your whole family eat healthier, visit: <https://bit.ly/3l6aist>

HealthAdvocateSM