

PREPARE FOR SLEEP DURING THE DAY

The elements of a good nights sleep start long before you go to bed. For a more refreshing rest, try to adopt some of these healthy sleep habits during the day.

STICK TO A SLEEP SCHEDULE

Sleep regularity is the key to boosting sleep quality. It is crucial to return to your normal circadian rhythm as soon as possible after coming off your final shift. This may involve a short nap after your last shift, before getting up and exposing yourself to sunlight throughout the day and aiming to still go to bed at a normal time that night.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR WORRIES

Stress and anxiety can keep us up at night. It can be helpful to adopt a healthy mental health habit to reduce these worries. Journaling, gratitude, worry time, and mindfulness can all have a significant impact.

EAT HEALTHY

Research tells us that a healthy diet with more vegetables and less processed foods, as well as staying properly hydrated can help our sleep. Just be sure to avoid drinking too much water before bed as you may need to wake up to use the bathroom.

It is important not to go to bed with an empty stomach but you should avoid a large meal within 2 hours of going to bed.

AVOID STIMULANTS

It is best to avoid consuming caffeine (tea, coffee, energy drinks, coke) or nicotine for at least 8 hours before going to bed. These substances act as stimulants and interfere with the natural chemicals that help us sleep. It is also best to avoid alcohol before bed. Alcohol may help relax you and help you to get to sleep at first, but it has significant impact on the quality of sleep.

EXERCISE

Regular exercise can help you sleep better, however it must be avoided within 4 hours of going to sleep. Morning exercise outside is a great way to set up your circadian rhythms, get morning sunlight and tick off physical activity.

GET OUTSIDE

Bright morning light (sunlight is best) will help with your body clock and the melatonin levels in the body. It is best to also be outside throughout the day when the sun is high.

AVOID NAPPING

It is best to avoid taking long naps during the day to ensure you build up enough 'sleep pressure' for your long period of sleep. If you need to rest because of your shift patterns, or extreme fatigue then be sure to keep it under 20min.

SLEEP MORE SOUNDLY AT NIGHT

Want to wake up feeling refreshed? When you're ready to head to bed, follow these tips to improve the quality and quantity of your sleep at night.

CREATE A HEALTHY SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

We spend more than a third of our lives in bed, so it's a worth investing in good bedding. A warm quilt, a comfy mattress, and a supportive pillow can make a huge difference to our sleep quality.

TEMPERATURE, NOISE AND LIGHT

Ensure your room is adequately quiet, cool and dark. You may need to invest in an eye mask, fan, thick curtain etc. to make this happen.

Research shows that sleepiness is associated with a drop in body temperature so ensure your room is cool.

BED IS FOR SLEEP & INTIMACY

Try not to use your bed for anything other than sleeping and sex, so that your body associates bed with sleep. If you use bed as a place to watch TV, eat, read and work, your brain will not learn this connection. If you are not asleep after 20min in bed, go to another room until you feel tired again, then return.

CREATE A WIND-DOWN ROUTINE

A sleep routine is a pattern of activities you follow in the same order each time you prepare to go to bed. Having a routine can be particularly useful when you don't have the same sleep and wake times each day, as it can help your system recognise that sleep time is approaching.

A sleep routine should occur over the 30-60 minutes before bed time, incorporating activities that help you relax such as a warm shower or bath, brushing your teeth, stretching, reading, journaling or meditation.

DON'T TAKE YOUR DEVICES TO BED

The blue light emitted by phones, computers, TV's and other screens can disrupt the body's natural sleep rhythm and make you feel more awake. Keep screens away for at least an hour before bed.

Additionally, people who struggle with sleep tend to watch the clock too much. Avoid having a clock/watch in the room.

HEAD TO BED ONLY WHEN YOU'RE TIRED

Don't force yourself to sleep. Only go to bed when you are feeling tired as you don't want to spend too much time awake in bed.

If you can't fall asleep within 20min, get out of bed and do something calming like reading or journaling until you feel tired.