Q. What can I do to sleep better at night?

A. Sleep like a baby or toss and turn all night? If you have trouble sleeping, you're not alone. Research shows that about one in three adults don't get the recommended 7 to 9 hours of sleep a night.[1]

Maybe you stay up late to get stuff done, watch TV, or hang out with friends. Or maybe you get to bed at a decent time, but can't get to sleep or wake up often. It happens. Whatever the reason, you need your sleep to stay healthy and reduce your risk for things like:[2]

- Obesity
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Mental health problems
- Accidents

Healthy Sleep Habits

If you want to get a better night's sleep, your doctor may be able to help. Sleep disorders and certain health conditions (like sleep apnea, depression, pain) can interfere with sleep. It's important to find out why you're not sleeping well to fix the problem.

For many people, getting a better night's sleep is a matter of lifestyle choices.

Healthy sleep habits like these can help you get your Zzzs:

1. **Create a bedtime routine.** Go to bed at the same time every night, even on weekends. And wake up at the same time every morning. Create a routine that starts at least an hour before bedtime to help you fall asleep.[3]

Do You Toss & Turn? or Sleep Like a Baby?

2. **Turn off electronics 1 to 2 hours before bed.** Watching a TV show or movie can keep your brain active when you're trying to go to sleep. Research shows light from electronics like a smartphone, tablet, computer or other device disrupts sleep,[4] even if you turn them off at bedtime. Bright lights can also keep you awake longer. So dim or turn off lights for a better night's sleep. Controlling noise and temperature can also help promote sleep.

3. **Avoid caffeine and alcohol before bed.** Drinking coffee, energy drinks, and soda with caffeine might give you a boost of energy. But drink them too late in the day, and you'll have trouble falling asleep later. Alcohol might help you fall asleep, but you won't sleep soundly through the night. People who have a drink before bed typically wake up more often because of breathing problems like sleep apnea and to use the bathroom.

4. **Be active.** If you want to sleep better at night, get 30 minutes or more of physical activity each day. In an earlier study, researchers found that daily exercise helped people sleep better at night, and be more alert.[5] Fit exercise into your schedule at least a couple hours before going to bed.

5. **Manage stress in healthy ways.** If you're stressed out, you might find yourself staring at the ceiling when you should be sleeping. Avoid dealing with stressful situations before bed. Save those problems for another day. Counseling, relaxation techniques, healthy relationships, humor, and even a balanced diet can help you manage stress.

You deserve a good night's sleep. Create a bedtime routine and make smart lifestyle choices, and you'll sleep better, have more energy, and be healthier.

References
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