



The Nurse's Corner

Catch Those Zzzz's...

Ah, sleep—a time for your body to recharge and restore itself. But to do this, you need to get enough good quality sleep on a regular basis. The number of hours you sleep each night is important. But there's more to quality sleep. It also includes being able to fall asleep soon after going to bed, sleep through the night, and get up no more than once a night. Unfortunately, the real world happens and can upset your sleep. So, what can you do to get the Zzzz's you need?

Here are some suggestions that might help. But remember, what works for one person might not work for another. So, test out different ideas to see what works best for you.

- Prepare yourself.
 - Set a time for going to bed each night and getting up every morning; follow it as much as possible every day, even on the weekends.
 - Have a regular routine before bed each night, like putting on your pajamas, washing your face, brushing your teeth, and then turning down the bed.
 - Allow yourself to wind down for about a half an hour to an hour before bed.
 - Unplug from your cell phones, tablets, computers, or laptops.
 - Try reading a book, listening to soft music, taking a warm bath, or drinking a warm drink (but make sure the drink does not have caffeine). Or try using relaxing scents such as lavender.
 - Do some light stretching, slow paced breathing, or relaxation exercises.
- Get your environment ready.
 - Keep your sleeping area is cool, quiet, comfortable, and dark.
 - Turn off any items that cause noise, like the television.
 - Opt for ear plugs or 'white noise,' like from a fan, sound machine or app.
 - If you use a clock in your bedroom, turn the clock face away from you.
 - Use room-darkening shades or blackout curtains, or even an eye mask to block out the light.

Getting your Zzzz's doesn't just involve the time before bed. Here are some things you can do throughout the day that can help, too.

- Be active and get some daily exercise, outside, if possible. But avoid exercising within 2 to 3 hours before bedtime.

- Avoid eating dinner late in the evening. Instead, keep food and snacks on the lighter side.
- Avoid nicotine and caffeine, especially in the late afternoon and evening.
- Watch how much alcohol you drink, especially in the evening. It might make you feel sleepy at first, but as your body breaks it down, it disrupts your sleep.
- Watch out for naps. If you need to nap, limit the nap short, to about 20 minutes or less, and try to nap in the early afternoon.

And remember, if more than 20 minutes or so have passed since you went to bed and you are still not asleep, get out of bed and do something relaxing. And then try again.