

It's All About Balance: Eat Smart, Move More, Rest Well

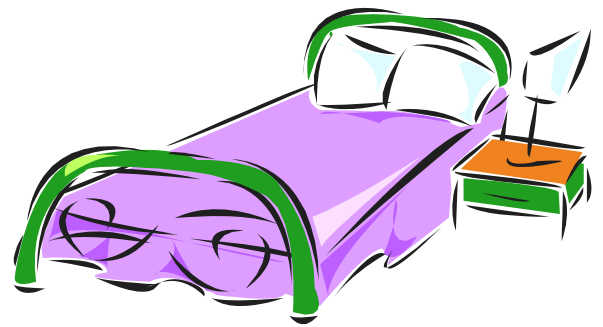
4 Restful Ways to Enjoy A Better Night's Sleep

Create a sleep friendly place.

A bedroom should be good for restful sleep. If possible, a room that is cool, dark, comfortable, neat and free of disruptions is best. Blackout curtains, eye shades, ear plugs, humidifiers, fans and other white noise devices can help make your sleep space as quiet as possible. You can help by putting televisions and computers into another room. Mattresses and pillows should be comfortable and supportive.

Maintain a regular schedule.

Do you want to fall asleep easily and wake up refreshed? It helps to keep your bedtimes and wake times as regular as possible, even on weekends. This helps to set your internal clock or sleep-wake cycle. Regular physical activity can also help you sleep well. For most people, it is better to be active during the day—like in the late afternoon, rather than right before bedtime. Meal time is critical too. It is usually best to finish eating two to three hours before going to bed.



Rethink your daily drinks.

Alcoholic drinks and those with caffeine, can affect sleep patterns. We often think of alcohol as something to make us sleepy. It actually disrupts sleep. Since drinking alcohol leads to less restful sleep, avoid alcohol close to bedtime. Caffeine is a strong pick-me-up. It can make you more alert and disrupt deep sleep. For a better night's sleep, avoid caffeine for six to eight hours before bedtime. For an easy caffeine calculator, go to www.sleepfoundation.org/.

Get into a relaxing bedtime routine.

Parents know that a regular bedtime routine is the best way to get children settled down and ready to sleep for the night. Things like a warm bath, reading a story or cuddling a favorite toy work well. The same idea also works well for adults. A relaxing, soothing routine that lets your body and brain know that it is time for sleep. Turn the lights down low and enjoy a soak in the bath. Listen to some soothing music. Read something light and enjoyable.

Think sleep for driving safely! According to www.DrowsingDriving.org, *"Sleepiness and driving is a dangerous combination. Most people are aware of the dangers of drinking and driving but don't realize that drowsy driving can be just as fatal."* Driving while drowsy can lead to impaired reaction time, judgment and vision. It also causes problems with processing information and increased aggressive behavior.



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