

Sleeping in the Swamp

Questions and Answers About Sleep

Why is sleep so important?



Many important things happen while you sleep, such as muscle and brain cell growth and the recharging of your immune system. Inconsistent sleep patterns or lack of sleep can lead to lower grades, decreased attention span and memory, more frequent mood swings, and an increase in anger and depression.

What if I like to stay up late on the weekend?

Although the best thing you can do is keep a consistent sleep schedule every day of the week, there are other things you can do. First, try taking classes that start later in the day. This can help make a later sleep/wake cycle on the weekends less of a drastic change from your normal schedule. Next, pick Friday to be your late night out. This will give you more time to resume your sleep schedule for Monday. Finally, get outside and exercise Monday morning before class. Sunshine and exercise can reset your biological sleep clock.

What should I do if I wake up and can't fall back asleep?

If you can't fall back asleep within 15 minutes, get out of bed and do something else until you feel sleepy again. Staying in bed longer than 15 minutes can cause you to stress about going to sleep, turning your bed into a source of anxiety and making it even harder to relax and fall asleep.

What should I do if my roommate or building is too noisy?

Soft earplugs are an inexpensive way to block out excess noise from your sleep environment. If you are concerned that earplugs may prevent you from hearing your alarm clock, you can use 'white noise' such as a fan to block the noise as well. You can also buy sleep masks to cover your eyes if the lighting in your room is too bright for you to sleep comfortably.

What if I think too much and can't fall asleep?

One thing you can do to help get things off your mind is keep paper or a journal next to your bed, but make sure you get out of bed when writing. Writing out all the things you are thinking about may help get them off your mind so it can relax and you can sleep.

Do TV or video games impact sleep?

Yes! Watching exciting TV shows or playing video games before bed can make you more alert and less likely to sleep.

What should I do if I have trouble falling asleep?

Here are some tips to help you fall asleep:

- Start relaxing an hour before bedtime.
- Do NOT go to bed until you are tired.
- Don't take naps. If you must take a nap, limit it to less than one hour, and take it early in the afternoon.
- Go to bed and wake up within the same hour each day.
- Eating a light carbohydrate snack with milk before bedtime may help you sleep.
- Stop drinking beverages with caffeine within 6 hours of bedtime.
- Don't drink alcohol within 2 hours of bedtime.
- Exercise on a regular basis, but not within 2 hours of bedtime.
- Take a walk outside in the morning to help you wake up.



Sleep Myths

If I can't sleep, I'll just go to the doctor and take sleep medicine.

Nope! Study after study has shown that changing sleep habits is more effective at improving sleep than taking sleeping pills. Also, once you start taking pills, it is hard to sleep without them, and there can be serious side effects.

I can stay up all night and do fine on a test the next day.

Not true! It is a proven FACT that people who sleep do MUCH better on tests than those who stay up all night cramming, even though the people who stay up all night THINK they do better.

If I stay up all night, I can just sleep later the next day to make up for it.

Wrong! You CANNOT make up for lost sleep. Sleeping in just throws off your sleep schedule even more and makes it harder to get to sleep at a normal time the next night.

It doesn't matter what time of day I sleep, as long as I get 8 hours of sleep.

Not true! Changing your sleep schedule is as bad as not getting enough sleep. It's just as important to sleep at the same time every night as it is to sleep for a full eight hours.

If I can't stick to my normal sleep schedule, I can just take naps the next day.

Wrong! Taking a nap can prevent you from feeling sleepy at bedtime and cause sleep problems to continue. If you must take a nap, take it early in the afternoon and limit it to one hour or less.



If I have trouble sleeping, I should stay in bed longer and try to 'force' myself to sleep.

No! This will just make you frustrated and turn your bed into a source of stress and anxiety, making it even harder to fall asleep.

Tips for controlling your Sleep Environment

- Do not use your bed or bedroom for any activity other than sleep or sex.
- Establish a set of regular pre-sleep routines that get you ready for bed. Each night do the same routine in the same order.
- Lie down to sleep, but only when sleepy. If you are unable to fall asleep within 15 minutes of going to bed or in the middle of the night, get out of bed and do something non-sleep related but that is relaxing, and return to bed only after you feel sleepy.



Common Sources of Caffeine

Listed below are some common sources of caffeine in every day foods, drinks, and medications.

Coffee

Percolated	100 - 350 mg
Instant	60 - 100 mg
Decaffeinated	2 - 4 mg/cup

Tea

Regular	30 - 120 mg
Green	10 - 20 mg

Sodas

Coca Cola & Diet Coke	45.6 mg/serving
Dr. Pepper	39.6 mg/serving
Pepsi	37.2 mg/serving
Diet Pepsi	35.4 mg/serving
Generic Colas	30 - 60 mg/serving
Jolt	71.2 mg/serving
Mountain Dew	55 mg/serving
Mellow Yellow	52.8 mg/serving

Food

Chocolate	8 mg/ounce
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Medications

Pain relievers (MidoTM), weight loss pills (DexatrimTM), and decongestants (SudafedTM) also contain caffeine. If you take medicine at night you may want to check the ingredients for caffeine or ask a pharmacist.