

WELLNESS TIPS

GETTING GOOD SLEEP

Getting enough sleep is important. It contributes to physical and mental health, improved concentration, mental clarity, and mood.

Sleep cycles are divided into 4 stages. Stages 1-3 compose non-REM sleep, transitioning from wakefulness to a deep sleep. During these stages heart rate, breathing, and brain waves slow, body temp decreases, and muscles relax. Stage 4 occurs during REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep, when most of your dreams occur. REM sleep is more active and heart rate, blood pressure and breathing increase and brain waves change. Cycles occur every 90 -110 minutes, and some people awaken partially or completely after a cycle, while others stay asleep.

Although individual needs vary, most adults need 7-9 hours of sleep per night.

Sleep quality is influenced by one's daily routine, lifestyle and habits. Here are some tips for improving your sleep:

Establish a regular sleep routine, with consistent bedtime and wake up time. Getting up at the same time stabilizes your body clock. For best sleep, maintain the routine during the weekends.

Avoid naps if possible, especially later in the day. If necessary, limit to 30 minutes. However, a nap is preferable to sleeping in if you are short of sleep because it is less disruptive to your body's sleep rhythm.

Avoid bright lights in the evening. Dim the lights, including screen lights so that melatonin production is less disrupted. This includes avoiding TV.

Exposing yourself to light in the morning will help you wake up.

Avoid screens 30-60 minutes before bed because the light is activating.

Develop a bedtime routine. Allow at least 30-60 minutes to wind down before bed.

Take a warm bath or shower 30 - 60 minutes before bed. Read or engage in a quiet activity. Practice relaxation exercises (see Tips next week) or meditation.

Create an environment conducive to sleep. Have a cool, dark, quiet room. Make sure your bed and pillow are comfortable. Reserve your bed for sleep and sex so that your body doesn't associate it with other activities.

If you aren't asleep in 20-30 minutes, leave your bedroom and do something quiet elsewhere, such as read or work a crossword puzzle until sleepy. (No TV). While this may be uncomfortable initially, as you feel you are losing sleep, research indicates this is effective in training your brain to associate the bedroom/bed with sleep, not frustration.

Avoid caffeine 4-6 hours before bed (some people need a much longer time, 10 hours even). This includes coffee, tea, caffeinated drinks, soft drinks, chocolate.

Engage in regular exercise. People who exercise 3 times per week tend to have deeper sleep. Try to complete vigorous exercise routines earlier in the day or at least 3 hours before bedtime, as there tends to be a boost in energy immediately following an exercise session.

Try to clear your head. Write down your worries in a journal earlier in the day or write down ideas or worries on a paper at your bedside and let them go until the next day.

Stop checking your clock at night or turn it away. It increases stress and doesn't help you fall asleep.

Avoid drinking alcohol right before bed. While it might help you fall asleep, it is disruptive to sleep quality.

REFRESH is a program offered through UI Student Health and Wellness that can be downloaded and help you make cognitive and behavioral changes to improve your sleep. Go to: <https://studentwellness.uiowa.edu/programs/refresh/>

If sleep continues to be problematic, consider seeing your primary care provider or mental health provider for further evaluation.

Contact an MSCC counselor for questions, concerns or to schedule an appointment.

HelpGuide. "How to Sleep Better." Melinda Smith, Lawrence Robinson, Robert Segal. August 2019.

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/sleep/getting-better-sleep.htm>

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. "Brain Basics: Understanding Sleep."

<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Understanding-Sleep>

John Hopkins. Health. "Seven Ways to Get a Healthier Night's Sleep."

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/seven-ways-to-get-a-healthier-nights-sleep>

CMHA BC and Anxiety Canada. [Here to Help](#). “Wellness Module 6: Getting a Good Night’s Sleep.”

<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/wellness-module/wellness-module-6-getting-a-good-nights-sleep>

University of Iowa Student Health and Wellness. [Refresh](#):

<https://studentwellness.uiowa.edu/programs/refresh/>

Stay well and stay healthy!

Liz Schacht elizabeth-schacht@uiowa.edu

MSCC osac-mscc@uiowa.edu 319-335-8056 1240 MERF

If you would like to review previous Wellness Tips, check the CCOM Medical Student Counseling Center Website: <https://medicine.uiowa.edu/md/student-support/student-counseling/mscc-wellness-programs-and-resources>