Improve Your Sleep Tonight

5 Proven Strategies to Try

We spend around a third of our lives in bed, so achieving good-quality sleep is essential. Poor sleep can contribute to or even cause a cascade of health problems, some quite serious. If you're looking to fall asleep faster, sleep for a longer duration, and probably most importantly, improve your sleep quality, in this guide we'll offer five very simple but proven strategies you can adopt to help you sleep and feel better tonight and every night.

SAFETY DISCLAIMER - sleep problems can be very serious. Severe sleep apnea, circulation, and heart irregularities at night can even be life-threatening. Please check with your doctor before starting any self-care routine.

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What constitutes good sleep?

Low sleep latency. Aka, how quickly you fall asleep. Falling asleep about 5-10 minutes after getting into bed is the ideal timeframe to aim for.

Sleep duration. Most people need more than they're currently getting. Between seven to nine hours is ideal, try to aim for at least seven hours every night.

Sleep continuity and quality. This becomes harder with age – children, pets, bathroom breaks can all disturb your sleep continuity, which has a knock-on effect on your overall sleep quality. Experts argue over exactly what the breakdown should be, but most healthy sleepers get around 25% deep sleep, 50% light sleep, and 25% REM sleep. When your sleep quality is poor, you tend to spend more time in light sleep than deeper, more restorative sleep and wake feeling unrested.

5 Sleep-boosting strategies that work

1. Make your bedroom dark and cold
Get blackout curtains, cover any blinking devices with electrical tape, and make your sleep environment as dark as possible. Make your room much colder than feels normal can make a huge difference. Experts suggest sleeping in a temperature of around 65°F/18°C. You can, of course, use a blanket.

2. Stick to a consistent sleep schedule
In the same way parents are obsessed about bedtime for their kids, you need to be equally as obsessed about yours. Some people are early nighters, while some are night owls. That's fine, but stay consistent and don't give yourself lifestyle jetlag by sleeping in on the weekends if you get up early during the week.

3. Take magnesium
This cheap, safe, supplement relaxes your muscles and has been proven to be effective for improving sleep. Try 200-400 mg of magnesium bisglycinate. It's like buying chalk, so no fancy brands are needed. It can have a laxative effect though, so start off slowly and dose based on your digestive response.

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4. Sleep in the fetal position or modified Fowler's position

Sleep on your side or semi-upright on your back with your torso elevated (known as Fowler's position). You're optimizing for good circulation and breathing. If you struggle with mouth breathing and snoring at night, try Breathe Right strips or a chin strap.

5. Practice yoga breathing at bedtime

If you have a nighttime prayer, meditation, or mindfulness practice already, do that before you go to sleep. If you don't, yoga breathing is incredibly effective and takes just a few minutes. The 4:8 supine breathing practice below will help to stimulate your parasympathetic nervous system, slow your heart rate, slow your respiration rate, and put you in a ready state for deep, restful sleep.

- Lie on your back, place your right hand on your heart, your left hand on your abdomen.
- Try to keep your right hand still throughout and allow your left hand to rise on the inhale and fall on the exhale.
- Inhale through your nose for 1, 2, 3, 4
- Exhale through your nose for 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1
- Repeat for a total of 10 rounds
- Place your hands at your sides, keep your eyes closed, breathe naturally in and out through your nose and allow yourself to fall asleep

Recommended reading

Russell Foster – [Life Time: Your Body Clock and Its Essential Roles in Good Health and Sleep](#)

Matthew Walker – [Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams](#)

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