

6 STEPS TO A BETTER *Night's Sleep*

When you sleep, your body is busy working to support healthy brain function and physical health. Throughout your life, sleep plays an important role in your overall wellness.

BELOW ARE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE GETTING A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP:

1. *Develop a consistent sleeping pattern.*

One of the best ways to get a good night's sleep is to be consistent about going to bed and waking up at the same time. It's also important to know how many hours of sleep you need to feel well-rested (six to eight hours is the average).

2. *Establish a pre-sleep routine.*

Start your transition period from wake time to sleep time with relaxing activities that help slow your mind and body about an hour before you go to bed. Take a bath, read, watch peaceful or lighthearted television, or listen to relaxing music.

3. *Create a supportive sleeping environment.*

Your sleeping environment can determine your sleep quality and how fast you fall asleep. A quiet, dark, and cool environment can help you to sleep soundly. Using "white noise" can help you fall asleep by blocking out disruptive noises. Sleep masks and heavy curtains are helpful in reducing light, which is an indicator for your brain to wake up.

4. *Avoid alcohol and caffeine.*

While alcohol can leave you feeling sleepy soon after consumption, this feeling won't last long. Several hours later it acts as a stimulant. Also, avoid food and beverages with caffeine like coffee, tea, soda, and chocolate. Remember, even decaf beverages contain some caffeine.

5. *Don't eat or drink too close to bedtime.*

There are several different reasons why eating right before bed is a bad idea. First, spicy foods can cause indigestion or heartburn. Secondly, your body is not prepared to digest any heavy meals while you are sleeping. Last but not least, drinking water 60 to 90 minutes before bedtime may cause you to use the bathroom throughout the night, interrupting your sleep.

6. *Exercise early.*

When you exercise your body secretes cortisol, a stress hormone which activates the alerting mechanism in your brain. As long as you finish exercising about three hours before bed you have a greater chance of falling asleep quickly and experiencing quality sleep.

6 Things You Shouldn't Eat (or Drink) Before Bed. (n.d.). Yahoo Shine. Retrieved March 20, 2014, from <http://shine.yahoo.com/healthy-living/6-things-shouldnt-eat-drink-bed-142100415.html>

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