

Sleep Well

Sleep is actually as complex as being awake – the body and brain use different parts of the night to do several different things that are vital for physical and mental health.

These two simple questions will let you know quickly if you are having enough sleep

1) After waking up in the morning, could you fall back asleep at 10:00 or 11:00 am?

If the answer is “YES” you are either not getting enough sleep, or your sleep quality is poor

2) Can you function at your best without caffeine before noon?

If the answer is “NO” you are either not getting enough sleep, or your sleep quality is poor

These 5 questions (the “SATED” Questionnaire) will give you more of an idea about your quality and quantity of sleep.

Aspect of sleep		Rarely (0)	Sometimes (1)	Usually/Always (2)
Satisfaction	Are you satisfied with your sleep?			
Alertness	Do you stay awake all day without dozing?			
Timing	Are you asleep between 2:00 and 4:00 am?			
Efficiency	Do you spend less than 30 minutes awake at night? including time taken to fall asleep, and all the times you might wake before getting up.			
Duration	Do you sleep 7 – 8 hours in every 24?			

A Score of 10 shows the best sleep health, a score of 0 means you have poor sleep health.

Adapted from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3902880/bin/aasm.37.1.9s1.tif>

How Much Sleep Time Do We Need?

These ranges have recently been agreed:

The report states that an hour more or less than recommended MAY be acceptable. It is probably best to assume the recommended time is right for you, until proved otherwise

This is the time of “sleep opportunity” during which it is assumed you are awake no more than about 30 minutes in total.

AGE	RANGE	RECOMMENDED SLEEP
Newborns	0-3 mo	14 – 17
Infants	4-11 mo	12 - 15
Toddlers	1-2 y	11 - 14
Preschoolers	3-5 y	10 - 13
School-aged children	6-13 y	9 - 11
Teenagers	14-17 y	8 - 9
Young adults	18-25 y	7 - 9
Adults	26-64 y	7 - 9
Older adults	65 + y	7 - 9

Hirshkowitz, Max, Kaitlyn Whiton, Steven M. Albert, Cathy Alessi, Oliviero Bruni, Lydia DonCarlos, and others, ‘National Sleep Foundation’s Sleep Time Duration Recommendations: Methodology and Results Summary’, *Sleep Health*, 1 (2015), 40–43 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sleh.2014.12.010>>

Tips for Getting A Good Night's Sleep

- **Stick to a sleep schedule.**

Aim to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day. As creatures of habit, people have a hard time adjusting to changes in sleep patterns. Sleeping later on weekends won't fully make up for a lack of sleep during the week and will make it harder to wake up early on Monday morning.

- **Have the right light exposure.**

Daylight is key to regulating daily sleep patterns. Try to get outside in natural sunlight for at least 30 minutes each day. If possible, wake up with the sun or use bright room lights in the morning. Sleep experts recommend that, if you have problems falling asleep, you should get an hour of exposure to morning or midday sunlight. As the evening goes on try to avoid bright light. Computer and phone screens shine with light that resembles midday sun, and during the evening and night this will confuse the part of your brain that sets your sleep cycles. To change the 'colour' of your computer, laptop, or phone screen at night, you can install an app such as f.lux, and if you use an IOS device, you can activate 'night shift'. If it is difficult for you to get outside to get morning light (particularly in winter) then consider bright 'full spectrum' lighting for your working or living space, or use a 'SAD light'.

- **Exercise is great, but not too late in the day.**

Try to exercise at least 30 minutes on most days but not later than 2-3 hours before your bedtime.

- **Avoid caffeine and smoking.**

Coffee, colas, certain teas, and chocolate contain the stimulant caffeine, and its effects can take as long as 8 – 12 hours to reduce the amount in your system by three-quarters. Therefore, a cup of coffee in the late afternoon can make it hard for you to fall asleep at night. Nicotine is also a stimulant, often causing smokers to sleep only very lightly. In addition, smokers often wake up too early in the morning because of nicotine withdrawal.

- **Avoid alcoholic drinks before bed.**

Having a "nightcap" or alcoholic beverage before sleep may help you relax, but robs you of deep sleep and dream sleep. Heavy alcohol ingestion also may contribute to breathing impairment at night. You also tend to wake up in the middle of the night when the effects of the alcohol have worn off.

- **Avoid large meals and beverages late at night.**

A light snack is okay, but a large meal can interfere with sleep. Drinking too many fluids at night can cause frequent awakenings to urinate.

- **If possible, avoid medicines that delay or disrupt your sleep.**

Some commonly prescribed heart, blood pressure, or asthma medications, as well as some over-the-counter and herbal remedies for coughs, colds, or allergies, can disrupt sleep patterns. If you have trouble sleeping, talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to see whether any drugs you're taking might be contributing to your insomnia and ask whether they can be taken at other times during the day or early in the evening.

- **Don't take naps after 3 p.m.**

Naps can help make up for lost sleep, but late afternoon naps can make it harder to fall asleep at night.

- **Relax before bed.**

Try to organise your day so that you have time to unwind before bed. A relaxing activity, such as reading or listening to music, should be part of your bedtime ritual. Decide a time at least an hour before bed when you will stop reading emails, or looking at your phone, computer or television (unless you can absolutely guarantee that what you are looking at will help you relax)

- **Take a hot bath before bed.**

The drop in body temperature after getting out of the bath may help you feel sleepy, and the bath can help you relax and slow down so you're more ready to sleep.

- **Have a good sleeping space.**

Get rid of anything in your bedroom that might distract you from sleep, such as noises, bright lights, an uncomfortable bed, or warm temperatures. You sleep better if the temperature in the room is kept cool. A TV, cell phone, or computer in the bedroom can be a distraction and deprive you of needed sleep. Having a comfortable mattress and pillow can help promote a good night's sleep. People who have insomnia often watch the clock, which makes their insomnia worse. Turn the clock's face out of view so you don't worry about the time while trying to fall asleep.

- **No-one ever fell sleep by TRYING**

“Trying” and “falling asleep” are opposites. We fall asleep when we stop trying to do anything at all. If you find yourself awake when you feel you should be sleeping, then focus on relaxing. If you know how to use your breathing to relax yourself, then you can do this. In any case you can choose to focus on feeling warm, comfortable, and undisturbed, and enjoy resting.

- **Don't just lie in bed awake.**

If you find yourself still awake after staying in bed for more than 30 minutes or if you are starting to feel anxious or worried, get up and do something relaxing, or something very boring, until you feel sleepy. The anxiety of not being able to sleep will make it harder to fall asleep.

- **See a health professional if you continue to have trouble sleeping.**

If you consistently find it difficult to fall or stay asleep and/or feel tired or not well rested during the day despite spending enough time in bed at night, you may have a sleep disorder. Your family healthcare provider or a sleep specialist should be able to help you, and it is important to rule out other health or emotional problems that may be disturbing your sleep.

Based on: 'Tips for Getting A Good Night's Sleep | NIH MedlinePlus the Magazine'
<<https://medlineplus.gov/magazine/issues/summer15/articles/summer15pg22.html>>