



Don't Snooze on Getting the Sleep You Need

Did you know the brain remains activate while sleeping? Restorative sleep is required for brain function and performance, including consolidating memories and skills learned during the day. This functionality is a critical component for memory recall. While asleep, the brain is hard at work, processing experiences, making connections and cleaning up. Insufficient sleep is attributed to decreased cognitive function, mood swings and lowered resilience to stress. Adults should aim for seven or more hours of sleep each night. So, let's gear up and explore ways to optimize our nightly restorative cycle!

Sleep-Enhancing Tips for Your Home

According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NIH), sleep is vital for healing and repairing your heart and blood vessels. Ongoing sleep deficiency is linked to an increased risk of heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and stroke. But the benefits don't stop there! Sleep helps support healthy growth and development, boosts muscle mass, aids digestion and fortifies our immunity. Consider this "checklist" for best optimal sleep at home:

- **Create a sleep-friendly environment** – Ensure your bedroom is dark, quiet and cool
- **Invest in sleep supports** – Use a sleep mask, earplugs, or a white noise machine if needed
- **Stick to a sleep schedule** – Try to wake up and go to sleep at the same time every day
- **Avoid electronic devices before bed** – Turn off all devices at least an hour before bedtime
- **Incorporate physical activity** – Useful to expedite falling and staying asleep
- **Limit daytime naps** – If you choose to nap, limit it to 20 to 30 minutes in the early afternoon
- **Manage stress** – Practice deep breathing, yoga, and meditation to promote restorative sleep
- **Be mindful of eating habits** – Eat your last meal at least three hours before going to bed

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The Benefit of Being Linked

Open Enrollment begins in October. Now's the perfect time learn more about Cook County's Benefits Program, which includes: EAP, life insurance, medical plans and vision coverage.



Take charge of your health today by researching your options and gaining a deeper understanding of the plans you're currently enrolled in.



[Click here to be linked to the Cook County Employee Benefits page.](#)



- **Limit alcohol and nicotine** – Alcohol disturbs sleep
- **Create a bedtime ritual** – Ritualize nightly activities you'll associate with going to sleep
- **Invest in comfort** – Bedding needs to be comfortable and made of fabric that regulates your body temperature

A Good Night's Sleep Boosts Overall Mood

Sleep and mood are interlinked more than we may realize. While we are aware of the fatigue and lack of focus after a night of poor sleep, its impact on our mental and emotional well-being is just as significant. The NIH emphasizes the profound relationship between sleep and mental health. Sleep deprivation does not just make you physically tired. Sleep deprivation can take a toll on your mental and emotional health, leading to an increase in negative emotions like anger, anxiety and sadness. More than just feeling refreshed, ***a good night's sleep equips us with the mental and emotional resilience needed to navigate daily challenges and enjoy a more balanced, harmonious life.***

Getting Back on Track: Strategies to Resume Sleep After Interruption

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, sleep can be disrupted. You might wake up in the middle of the night due to a disturbing dream, a loud noise, a crying baby or even a need to use the restroom. It can be frustrating, especially when the need for quality sleep is paramount. However, there are several strategies to help you return to the realm of dreams after such interruptions and we are here to help!

Relaxation techniques

Mindfulness and deep breathing exercises can help your body and mind return to a restful state. One popular method is the '4-7-8' technique, where you inhale for four seconds, hold the breath for seven seconds, and then exhale slowly for eight seconds. Repeat this cycle until you feel calm and ready for sleep.

Progressive muscle relaxation

This involves tensing and then relaxing each muscle group in your body. Start with your toes and work your way up to your



head. As your body physically relaxes, your mind will follow.

Avoid clock-watching

Staring at the clock during a sleep disruption can increase stress, making it even harder to fall back asleep. Turn your clock's face out of view so you don't worry about the time passing.

Limit exposure to light

Keep your room as dark as possible. If you need to get up, use a dim nightlight in the hallway or bathroom. Light can signal to your brain that it's time to wake up, making it more difficult to fall back asleep.

Keep a sleep diary

This can be helpful to spot patterns or issues that could be

interrupting your sleep. Maybe you'll find that late-night snacks or screen time are the culprits, and adjustments can be made accordingly.

Avoid laying awake

If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes of waking up, get out of bed and do a quiet, non-stimulating activity like reading a book. Avoid screens as they emit blue light, which can interfere with the production of the sleep-inducing hormone, melatonin.

Sleep interruptions are frustrating for everyone. Hopefully, utilizing the aforementioned strategies will promote more restful and restorative sleep. Be patient with yourself and maintain a positive attitude. In most cases, regular sleep patterns return after minor adjustments. However, if sleep disruptions persist and impact your quality of life, prioritize scheduling an appointment with a medical professional. Reach out to your Primary Care Physician (PCP) or a sleep specialist for further guidance and potential treatment.

Prioritize your sleep. Your body, mind and mood will thank you!

