

How to Get a Better Night's Sleep

The following are some general principles to help you to get a good night's sleep.

Introduction: Medical research is now showing that poor or inadequate sleep places a person at risk for physical and mental health problems. Just some of these increased risks include:

- heart disease
- stroke
- type 2 diabetes
- obesity
- high blood pressure
- depression
- reduced attention span
- decreased alertness
- reduced immune function
- increase in accidents
- poor memory and cognitive function
- an overall lower quality of life

The following are some measures you can take that may help achieve a better night's sleep. Consider checking areas that you would like to work on to get the sleep that you need, and reduce your risk of physical and mental health complications.

♦ **Avoid things that may make your sleep worse:**

- Having a TV or computer in your bedroom.
- Drinking alcohol, especially later in the day.
- Drinking or eating products with caffeine (sorry, chocolate also) in excess, or after 2PM.
- Watching TV or using digital devices late in the day.
- Taking more than a 10 minute nap during the day.
- Eating a heavy meal within 3 hours prior to bedtime.
- Staying in bed more than 20-30 minutes if you can't fall asleep.

♦ **Consider things that may improve your sleep:**

- Have a regular routine to wake up and go to sleep at the same time, even on weekends and holidays.
- Keep your bedroom comfortable (cool, quiet and dark).
- Use the bed for sleep (or sex for those married) only.
- If you can't fall asleep within 20-30 minutes, get out of bed and do something calming and relaxing until you are ready to sleep (read [especially Scripture], calming music).
- Regular exercise during the day but avoid it within 3 hours of bedtime.
- Take a warm bath or shower 2-3 hours before bedtime.
- A few hours before bedtime, make a list of things that bother you ("worry list") and do not take them to bed with you. Be committed to address them during the day when you feel rested and better prepared.

After checking the above areas you would like to address, pick one or two you most desire to work on. After a week or two, or when you feel you have succeeded, pick one or two more and keep at it until you are getting 7-9 hours of good quality sleep.

"I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord make me dwell in safety."
(Psalm 4:8 NIV84)