
Is Your Sleep Schedule Out of Whack?

How to Get Your Sleep Schedule Back on Track
and
The Connection between Sleep and Mental Health

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What is the Connection between Sleep and Mental Health?

- Neuroimaging and neurochemistry studies suggest that regularly not getting enough sleep can lead to “negative thinking and emotional vulnerability.”
- Sleep disruption impairs “thinking and emotional regulation.”
- Insufficient sleep among adolescents is associated with loss of motivation, emotional disturbance, and poor grades.
- A short night of sleep has been linked to an “increased risk for depression.”
- Getting a good night of sleep can aid in increasing “mental and emotional resilience.”

How Much Sleep Do You Need?

According to the *American Academy of Pediatrics*,

13-18 years old need

8 to 10 hours of sleep per night.

How many hours of sleep are you getting?

Tips to Improve Your Sleep

- **Eat a healthy and well-balanced diet.** Avoid a high carb/high sugar diet. Sugar intake is associated with [“less restorative sleep.”](#) Also, [going to bed hungry or too full can hinder your sleep.](#)
- **Engage in regular aerobic activity.** This helps people [fall asleep more quickly, spend increased time in deep sleep, and wake up less often during the night.](#) Some examples of aerobic activity include running, biking, walking, and swimming. Aim to [finish exercising at least 4 hours before bedtime;](#) otherwise, you will be too stimulated to fall asleep.
- **Avoid drinking caffeinated drinks.** [Caffeine has a half-life of 5 to 7 hours](#) so drinking caffeine even in the morning can negatively affect your sleep at night.

Tips to Improve Your Sleep

- **Keep a regular sleep schedule.** [Aim to go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day.](#)
- **Avoid taking long naps.**
 - If you need an extra boost, take a “power nap” keeping it to [15-30 minutes](#). When you sleep more than 30 minutes you enter into deep sleep. Power naps improve [“memory, decision-making, and creativity.”](#)
 - If you are extra sleepy, take a [90 minute nap](#) to move through an entire sleep cycle. Benefits of this type of nap include [improved procedural memory, creativity, and improved mood](#).
 - [Avoid sleeping more than 90 minutes or taking naps past 4:00 PM](#) to prevent derailing your sleep schedule.

Tips to Improve Your Sleep

- **Avoid staring at bright screens, especially blue light, 2-3 hours before bed.** [Blue light](#) decreases melatonin production, which interferes with your circadian rhythm, also known as your body's biological clock. If you need to use an electronic device within 2-3 hours of bedtime, wear blue-blocking glasses or use an app that filters out blue light.
- **Take a bath one to two hours before bed.** [Hot baths](#) increase your body temperature and as your body temperature drops, you will start to feel sleepy.
- **Relax.** Practice a [deep breathing exercise](#). Do relaxing stretches. Meditate on God's Word. Pray.
- **Create a cool, quiet, and dark environment.** Use a fan to cool your room (if needed), earplugs and/or a white-noise machine to drown out noise, and curtains or an eye mask to shield your eyes from light.

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