



Tips to get a good night's sleep

About 30 percent to 40 percent of adults say they have trouble either falling asleep or staying asleep, according to the National Center for Sleep Disorders Research at the National Institutes of Health. A good night's sleep can make a huge difference in your work performance. Lack of sleep can put you at greater risk for a car or other accident. It's also linked to poor behavior in kids, and higher risks of high blood pressure, heart disease and other health problems.

During sleep, your body produces hormones that fuel growth, build muscle, repair cells and fight infections. Hormones released during sleep also affect how the body uses energy.

Here are some steps to take to improve your sleep.

1. **Stick to a sleep schedule.** Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, including weekends. Most people of all ages need seven to eight hours of sleep each night.
2. **Exercise early.** Regular activity promotes better sleep, but avoid exercising two to three hours before bedtime.
3. **Set a routine.** Cue your body that it's time to wind down by doing the same things in the same order. Maybe take a warm bath or shower, read a book or listen to soothing music.
4. **Watch what you eat.** Don't go to bed either hungry or stuffed. Avoid caffeine and nicotine. Steer clear of alcoholic drinks before bed, which may wake you up in the middle of the night.
5. **Don't lie in bed awake.** The anxiety of not being able to sleep can make it harder to fall asleep. If you're still awake after more than 20 minutes, do something relaxing until you feel sleepy.
6. **Limit naps.** Long daytime naps can interfere with nighttime sleep, but if needed, a 10-30 minute catnap in the early afternoon can boost brain power.
7. **Tune out.** Eliminate sleep distractions such as a TV, any electronic device, bright lights, uncomfortable bed or hot temperature in the bedroom. This includes limits on how often pets or kids sleep with you.
8. **Manage stress.** If your to-do list keeps your eyes open, jot down what's on your mind and then set it aside to focus on tomorrow.

If you're still tired after making these adjustments, you may have a sleep disorder such as sleep apnea. Contact your health care provider for help.

—Information provided by Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota

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All Members should consult their personal physician before beginning any exercise or weight loss program. Prior to seeking additional services, please refer to your "Certificate of Insurance & Summary Plan Description" for a list of covered services, limitations, and exclusions.