



Strategies to Optimize Sleep

Stress can lead to difficulties falling asleep, nightmares, and even frequent wakefulness. Even moderate sleep deprivation can produce cognitive impairments that are similar to or even worse than having a blood alcohol content of .05 . Not getting enough sleep has also been linked to an impaired immune system, something we must manage especially during the Coronavirus outbreak. Here are some quick tips to help you improve your sleep and get 7-8 hours a night.



Lower the thermostat when you go to bed. The body tends to sleep best at around 68°



Avoid drinking caffeine and energy drinks after 12 pm. Caffeine stays in your system for up to 6 hours after initial consumption.



Try to get the room as dark as possible using blackout curtains. The dark room can help signal your internal circadian rhythms to fall asleep. If you don't have access to the curtains you can also use a sleep mask or a bandana.



Minimize outside noise and other distractors, even if you have to wear headphones or earplugs. Play instrumental music, a meditation track, or listen to a relaxation script. These can easily be found online.



Exercise can be helpful in aiding sleep but try not to exercise so close to bedtime especially if it makes you feel energized.



Use breathing and relaxation techniques such as Progressive Muscle Relaxation. Doing this for 5-7 minutes can help you quiet your mind and fall asleep faster.



Sleep when you are tired! Trying to force yourself to sleep when you are not tired can have the opposite effect. If you haven't fallen asleep within 30 minutes of being in bed get up and go into a different room to read or have a light snack.



Develop a consistent sleep routine to do before bed. It will help signal your body that it is time to go to sleep. Also don't sit in the bed with your laptop and work. You want your brain to associate your bed with sleeping.