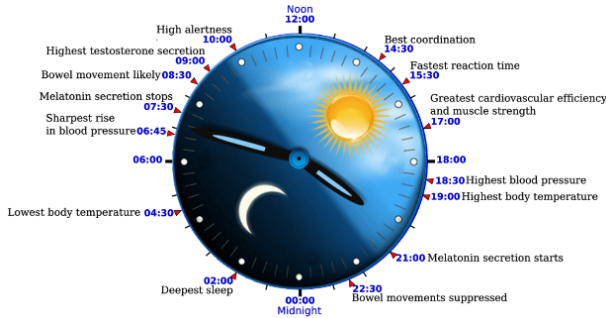


Countdown to Sleep

Sleep is an essential requirement for survival, like breathing and eating. Its regulation is similarly complex, but understandable. There are numerous factors within your control; adjusting your behavior to load these factors in favor of sleep is called ‘sleep hygiene.’



WHAT TO DO TODAY:

-  **SCHEDULE YOUR BEDTIME.**
-  **REMOVE THE TV, COMPUTER OR OTHER DISTRACTIONS FROM YOUR BEDROOM.**
-  **PLAN YOUR BEDTIME ROUTINE.**

CREATE YOUR BEDTIME ROUTINE:

Choose 2-4 things that will be part of your every-night bedtime routine. Doing these same things will cue your brain that it's time to settle in for the night.

- Take a shower/bath
- Fold down the blankets on the bed
- Turn on a sound machine
- Wash your face
- Brush your teeth
- Drink a cup of herbal tea
- Read fiction or poetry
- Lay out clothes for the next day
- Stretch
- Meditate

TIMELINE FOR BETTER SLEEP:

7 HOURS BEFORE BEDTIME:

-  **CUT OUT CAFFEINE**

2 HOURS BEFORE BEDTIME:

-  **STOP SNACKING**
-  **NO MORE WORK START RELAXING**

30 MINUTES BEFORE BEDTIME:

-  **TURN ALL DEVICES OFF and remove them from your bedroom.**
-  **BEGIN YOUR PERSONALIZED PRE-SLEEP ROUTINE**
-  **ADJUST TEMPERATURE**
68 - 72 degrees F is the ideal temp for sleeping.

3 HOURS BEFORE BEDTIME:

-  **NO MORE ALCOHOL**
-  **WRAP UP EXERCISE**
It raises your body temperature and increases cortisol hormones.
-  **FINISH DINNER**
Give your body time to digest heavy foods.

1 HOUR BEFORE BEDTIME:

-  **TURN OFF THE TV FOR THE NIGHT**

BEDTIME:

-  **TURN OFF LIGHTS**
darkness is important.
-  **CLOSE YOUR EYES AND RELAX**

CIRCADIAN RHYTHM—just like flowers close at night and open at dawn, your body has daily cycles.

Reinforcing the ebb and flow of this cycle is the key to good sleep. You can strengthen your circadian rhythm by knowing the information your body uses to determine when it is appropriate to sleep:

Timing— keep a consistent schedule. Go to bed at least 8 hours before you need to get up. Get up at the same time every day, with less than an hour change on weekends and holidays; program your smartphone to block incoming calls and texts during sleep hours.

Caffeine— limit your intake to the equivalent of one or two cups of coffee per day before noon, no matter how sleepy you feel. Check labels for caffeine.

Physical Activity— Consult your physician. Daily exercise primes your body to sleep at night; respect your limitations AND push your boundaries within a healthy limit. It doesn't need to be exhausting, even gentle activity of any kind will help.

Mental Stimulation— The levels of stimulation during the day and at night should be drastically different. Keep your mind challenged and busy during the day so that winding down to sleep is a welcome break.

Evening Food and Drink— Eat your large evening meal three hours before bedtime. Reduce your fluid intake two hours before bedtime so that you are not awakened by a full bladder before morning. If you are hungry before bedtime, eat a light snack; a small glass of warm milk and a piece of toast may be an excellent choice. Do not consume alcohol before bedtime—it does not induce quality sleep.

Light— Avoid bright lights after your evening meal. Many computers and smartphones include a setting to reduce “blue light” to help your brain understand that it is time to wind down for sleep. Wear sunglasses inside the house if you have no way to dim the lights.

Temperature— Try taking a brief hot shower at least one hour before bedtime. Keep your bedroom cool. As your core temperature drops slightly, in combination with reduced light and alertness, your brain gets the message that it is a good time to sleep.

Alertness— Turn off computer monitors and television at least an hour before going to bed. Turn off ALL interactive devices 30 minutes prior to bedtime; establish a relaxing routine that uses those 30 minutes to tell your brain that it is time to sleep, and perform this routine every night. Keep your brain occupied with performing your routine rather than worrying about sleep. Don't chase sleep— make room for it.

Location— Your bedroom should be a dim, cool, relaxing and pleasant space, used only for sleeping and intimacy. Use a lower wattage nightstand lamp that you can turn off as you get into bed.

Interest— If you do not fall asleep after 20 minutes in bed, get up, but do not reward your brain for not sleeping by reading something interesting or doing something enjoyable. No television. Read something dull or do something boring in dim lighting until you feel drowsy, then repeat some of your bedtime routine, and go to bed. This is similar to 'counting sheep.'