

# HEART HEALTHY TOOLBOX

Lifestyle Changes  
for Everyone



## SECTION 7 SLEEP

### FOR PATIENTS

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# Sleep, Blessed Sleep

## The importance of Adequate Sleep for Your Health

A good night's sleep not only helps your mood and energy level, it may also help make your immune system stronger and help you fight a cold or flu. New studies also show that if you get 7-8 hours of sleep at night, you can lower your chance of gaining weight in your belly area—the kind of fat that increases your risk of diabetes and heart disease. For more information on how sleep fits into an overall healthy lifestyle, visit Life's Essential 8 at [heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/lifes-essential-8](http://heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/lifes-essential-8).

**Here are some tips to help you get a good night's sleep starting tonight!**

### 1 Set a schedule.

Go to bed and get up at the same time each day, even on weekends. This helps your body develop a regular sleep-wake cycle.

If you don't fall asleep after being in bed 15-30 minutes, get up and do something relaxing. Go back to bed when you are tired. Lying in bed worrying about not being able to sleep can make it harder to nod off.

### 2 Make it a routine.

Do the same things every night as you get ready for bed. Make these activities relaxing—take a warm bath or shower, read, or listen to soothing music. This tells your body it is time to quiet down and gets your body ready for sleep. It is best not to be on your computer, tablet, or phone, or watch TV right before bed. This can make it harder to get to sleep.

### 3 Eating and drinking matter.

Don't eat a heavy meal right before you go to bed. Feeling over-full may keep you awake. It can lead to extra trips to the bathroom. If you are sensitive to caffeine and it keeps you awake at night, try not to drink coffee, tea, or cola late in the day. Alcohol may also make it harder to sleep, causing you to wake up in the middle of the night.

### 4 Prepare your space.

Fix the room you sleep in to make it better for sleeping. Usually this means a cool, dark, quiet space. Add room-darkening window blinds or curtains, earplugs, fans or other devices to help you sleep. Find a comfortable mattress, pillow and bedding. Make sure you have enough room—especially if you share your bed with someone else.

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## 5 Don't take long afternoon naps.

If you have trouble sleeping well at night, only take a short 20-30 minute nap mid-afternoon. Those who work at night might need to sleep during the day. If this is the case, set a routine so you can adjust your internal body clock.

## 6 Get regular activity.

Physical activity can help you go to sleep faster and sleep more deeply. Don't exercise too close to bedtime because this can make you feel more energized. It might be better to exercise earlier in the day.

## 7 Manage stress.

A busy, active mind can make it difficult to relax and sleep well. This can be a sign of too much to do, or too much stress in your life. See if you can get better organized, delegate tasks, say "no", and make a schedule so you get the really important things done. Deep breathing or yoga can help manage stress and help you relax. Write down what's on your mind before you go to bed—then set it aside to be picked up the next day.

## 8 Know when to contact your doctor or nurse.

Most people have trouble sleeping once in a while. But if you have trouble sleeping several nights a week, ask your doctor or nurse if you have a medical problem that is making it hard for you to sleep. They can help find and treat any medical problem that might be causing your sleep trouble.

### CHECK OFF THE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP

Get room-darkening shades/curtains

Limit caffeine and alcohol in the evening

Be more active early in the day

Go to bed at the same time

Move the TV out of my bedroom

Make my afternoon naps short

Avoid big meals close to bed time

Learn a relaxation or stress management technique

Talk to my nurse or doctor

Avoid phone or screen time before bed.