

Q. What can I do to sleep better?

A. If you wake up feeling tired, or have trouble falling asleep at night, you're not alone. In fact, lack of sleep is a public health epidemic. Some sleep-related issues are linked to health problems. Sleep quality can also be affected by your environment and lifestyle habits. Fortunately, there are a number of things you can do to improve your quality of sleep.

The problem with poor sleep

If you don't enough sleep, or your quality of sleep is poor, it has an impact on your health. And it's more than just feeling tired. Lack of sleep can contribute to accidents, obesity, heart disease, diabetes, depression, certain types of cancer, and other health problems.

Aim for 7 to 8 hours nightly

A 10-year study of more than 6,000 people found that those who got 7 to 8 hours of sleep every day lived longer than those who got less sleep. Aim for 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night. In the study, people who slept less than 7 hours or more than 9 hours a night didn't live as long.



How to get better sleep

Before you take over-the-counter medicine to help you sleep, try these strategies to get your Zzzs:

- **Keep to a regular sleep schedule** 7 days a week.
- **Exercise daily.** Aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity. Being physically tired at the end of the day helps people get to sleep sooner, and stay asleep longer.
- **Relax before bedtime** (e.g., take a hot bath, read, meditate).

- **Create a comfortable sleep environment.** It's best to make your room as dark as possible and eliminate distractions (e.g., outside light, a messy room, pets, room temperature) that could keep you awake.
- **Avoid watching TV** or using your computer or mobile devices in bed.
- **Don't eat a large meal** or drink a lot of liquids late at night.
- **Don't exercise or nap late** in the evening.
- **Don't drink alcohol**
- **Avoid caffeine and nicotine**

If you put these strategies into practice and still have sleep problems, see your doctor.

Sources:

*American Cancer Society.
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
Journal of the American Medical Association.
National Institutes of Health.*