

Sleep 101

Are you getting enough sleep? Here's how you know:

- Do you wake up refreshed and alert without an alarm?
- Do you use caffeine or sugar to try to wake up or stay alert?
- Do you feel drowsy mid afternoon?
- Can you fall asleep “anywhere” or as soon as your head hits the pillow?
- Do you feel a need to “make up” your sleep on weekends?

If you answered “no” to question 1 or “yes” to any of the other questions, you need help! Here are some tips.

Sleeping better:

Here's the most important thing -- ***Treat sleep as the most important activity of the day.*** Without it, you will operate at low efficiency, damage your health, and risk being cranky. If you don't value sleep, if it's discretionary, these techniques won't help.

- Get to bed half an hour earlier than usual.
- Do something relaxing before bed (read, listen to music).
- Try to get to sleep at the same time each night and get up at the same time every morning.
- Don't take more than a 30 minute nap during the day, and never within 5 hours of bedtime.
- Associate your bedroom and bed specifically with sleep: Use your bed only for sleep and sex. Never work in bed. Get into bed only if/when you're sleepy.
- Avoid nicotine after dinner.
- Avoid caffeine after noon.
- Don't drink lots of liquids near bedtime.
- Exercise at least 3 times per week, but at least three hours before bed.

If you can't sleep:

- ✓ Get out of bed: You want to associate your bed with sleepiness, not frustration!
- ✓ If you're worrying about something, get it out of your system by writing it down.
- ✓ Listen to a meditation or relaxation “tape.”
- ✓ Let go of “daytime” thoughts.
- ✓ Read something relaxing.
- ✓ Don't look at the clock.
- ✓ Keep the lights low.