

Life's Essential 8: Sleep

It may surprise you but getting a good night's rest is one of the most important things you can do for your heart, your mind, and your overall health.

Research shows that 7-9 hours each night is ideal for adults.

However, the quality of your sleep is just as important as the number of hours you sleep.

Poor sleep can cause you to feel tired, unproductive and unfocused, and it's also tied to higher calorie intake and may raise your risks for high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

Whether you'd like to have an easier time falling asleep, staying asleep, or getting better quality sleep, the following small changes can help you ensure a better night's rest.

Step 1: Optimize your sleep space

If your living situation allows, ensure that your sleep space is just for sleep and relaxing. Move other activities to other spaces in your home.

If you can, avoid using your sleep space for emails, social media, studying or working.

A designated sleep space helps your mind wind down, so consider keeping your phone and electronic devices out of the bedroom to reduce sleep interruptions.

- Reduce disruptive lights or sounds to keep your sleep space quiet and comfortable.
- Keep your nighttime room temperature cool. About 65° F is recommended for good sleep for adults.

Step 2: Create A Bed-Time Routine

Try to go to bed and wake up at about the same time each day.

- Manage stress or to-dos that keep you from relaxing by making a list you can revisit tomorrow.
- Create a cut-off time for:
 - Work
 - Dealing with conflict
 - Watching television or using devices.
- Wind down your day by spending the last one or two hours before bedtime enjoying relaxing activities such as practicing mindfulness, being together with people, meditating or reading.

Step 3: Get treatment if needed

- If anyone tells you your nighttime breathing or snoring is concerning, go get it checked out.

Making sleep a priority can improve your health. When better rest adds up, you can experience life-long benefits.

Start making healthier choices to sleep better today.