

58 Tips to Help Older Adults Get a Better Night's Sleep

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Not getting enough zzzzs at night? Read on to learn how to get better, more restful sleep.

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In this story

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Since a third of our lives is spent sleeping, you'd think we'd all be experts at it. Yet for many Americans suffering from chronic sleep problems, falling — and staying — asleep is anything but easy. If you've spent restless nights tossing and turning, chasing sleep that just won't come, you don't have to live in groggy agony. Here are steps to fine-tune your sleep routine so you can drift off to dreamland more easily.

WHERE TO START



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1. Learn how many hours work best for you

In your 20s, you needed eight to nine hours of sleep, but in your 50s, you need about an hour less, says Dr. Nalaka Gooneratne, a sleep medicine physician and geriatrician at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine. Although some do better with less sleep, for most adults, getting seven to eight hours per night of quality sleep is critical for health and well-being, says Wendy M. Troxel, a senior behavioral and social scientist at the Rand Corp. Pay attention to your alertness levels during the day as a better measure of sleep quality, suggests Dr. Sara Benjamin, medical director at the Johns Hopkins Sleep Disorders Center. If you're always tired or run-down, it could be a sign you're not getting enough — or enough quality — sleep.

2. But understand there is a minimum

While everyone's ideal slumber time may differ, studies have shown there's a baseline. "There is ample data to show that people who [regularly] sleep six hours or less [nightly] will increase their cardiovascular risk and will likely not live a normal lifespan," says Dr. Adrian M. Pristas, corporate medical sleep director for Hackensack Meridian Health in New Jersey. Routinely sleeping any less puts "a stress on your body," which can lead to increased risk for heart attack or stroke, Pristas says.

[Six Pillars for Lifelong Brain Health](#)

[Learn about building lifelong, healthy habits at any age — and gain strategies for achieving better sleep, relaxation, connection and energy to help you live your best life.](#)

3. Stick to your routine

Once you've found your ideal rhythm, stick with it, even on weekends. When it comes to maximizing overall sleep health, "there is nothing better than routine — it's a must," says Dr. Abhinav Singh, facility director of the Indiana Sleep Center in Greenwood, Indiana, and medical review panel member for SleepFoundation.org. Research has shown that disruptions in sleep regularity can negatively affect your metabolism, lead to an increased risk of diabetes and even damage overall cardiovascular health. "If you're struggling to sleep, the first thing you must do is get up at the same time every day," Pristas says. "Having a consistent wake time is the cornerstone of good sleep."

4. Use data from wearables wisely

With individualized sleep data so easily accessible now from a range of trackers and wearable devices such as watches, rings, smart masks and smart mattresses, it might be tempting to rely on those stats as a window into your sleep quality. But sleep specialists say there's a limit to the accuracy of wearable health trackers.

"The reality is that trackers can't tell what kind of sleep you're getting very well," Pristas explains. "They do a very good job recognizing whether you're probably asleep or probably awake. And after that, it's a little bit of fiction."

That said, if you're seeing data that only about 20-25 percent of your sleep each night is deep sleep, don't fret. "That's actually spot-on" for what your body needs, says Carleara Weiss, a sleep science adviser for Aeroflow Sleep and assistant professor at the University of Buffalo School of Nursing whose research focuses on behavioral sleep medicine, aging and Alzheimer's disease.

5. Get some sunshine

Light exposure helps drive the body's circadian rhythm, which is key to the natural sleep-wake cycle. Light sends a signal to the body that it's time to be awake, and the absence means it's time to go to sleep. Try to get outside for some sunshine at least a little each day — it's best if you do it in the morning. "Light is by far the strongest cue to our circadian rhythm, but you have to consistently expose the body to light and dark cues over a few weeks in order to really set and strengthen it," says Oregon State University assistant professor Jessee Dietch, a psychologist certified in behavioral sleep medicine who runs the school's Sleep Health Assessment, Intervention and Dissemination lab.

6. Avoid light before bedtime

To tell your body it's time to wind down, do your best to reduce bright-light exposure in the evening and at night. Take small steps, such as using low-light table lamps instead of bright overhead lights indoors at night, and wearing sunglasses if you're going to be outside in the summertime after dinner, Benjamin suggests. "You want to prioritize less bright light in the evening and more bright-light exposure in the morning," she says.

7. Introduce therapy light

If you live in a region that's often overcast, as Dietch does, consider investing in a SAD (seasonal affective disorder) therapy light to boost your daytime light exposure. These added rays during the day could help your body feel sleepy come nighttime, when the lights go out. The Mayo Clinic recommends looking for a light that provides an exposure of 10,000 lux and produces as little ultraviolet as possible. Use it the first hour you wake up for 20 to 30 minutes. Position the light 16 to 24 inches away from your face, and keep your eyes open, but don't stare directly at the light. Models range in price from around \$25 to \$200. Keep in mind that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) doesn't regulate light boxes, and health insurance usually doesn't cover them.

8. Slip on a sleep mask

"Wearing a sleep mask can improve sleep by addressing several environmental factors, including blocking out any artificial light and creating a dark environment for sleep," says Dr. Funke Afolabi-Brown, a triple-board-certified sleep-medicine physician. "This facilitates the production of the sleep hormone melatonin as darkness serves as a signal to the melatonin production center in the brain called the pineal gland, and less light exposure makes us less likely to have sleep disruptions and awakenings from light pollution." Dr. W. Chris Winter, who has practiced sleep medicine and neurology in Charlottesville, Virginia, since 2004, loves the portability of sleep masks: "They help to ensure dark hotel rooms and better odds of falling asleep on a plane."

9. Figure out your chronotype

Divided into four categories — bear, wolf, lion, dolphin — chronotypes tell you when to sleep according to your internal clock. Most people are considered bears: They sleep and wake according to the sun. The wolf chronotype prefers to wake at noon, and lions like to rise early and are productive until about noon. Dolphins have trouble following any schedule and are most productive from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

To find out which chronotype you are, experiment — without an alarm clock — over two to three weeks to find your natural sleep rhythms, suggests Alicia Roth, a clinical psychologist with the Cleveland Clinic who specializes in behavioral sleep medicine. Go to bed when you feel sleepy. Get up when your body wakes naturally. If you find yourself feeling alert and well rested as a result, make this sleep-wake cycle your go-to, and read more about your chronotype to tap into more tips.

10. Limit alcohol in the evenings

For the best sleep quality, don't drink any alcohol in the three to four hours before you plan to go to sleep. "Alcohol absolutely disturbs sleep, so reducing alcohol intake close to bedtime is a solid tip," Dietch says. A drink may initially help you feel relaxed and sleepy, but studies have repeatedly shown that alcohol disrupts the body's normal sleep stages, including reducing the deep sleep and REM cycles that are key to overall sleep quality. In addition, the extra liquid before bed could lead to an extra trip to the bathroom during the night, further disturbing your slumber.

11. Cut down on caffeine

Nix the late-afternoon coffee habit, or order decaf. Science has consistently shown that drinking caffeine within 8 hours of bedtime disrupts sleep. Specifically, late-day caffeine intake can disrupt the body's natural circadian rhythm, prolong the time it takes to fall asleep, and reduce sleep length and quality.

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12. Eat more fruits and vegetables

Getting your CDC-recommended daily dose of produce — roughly 1.5 to 2 cups of fruits and 2 to 3 cups of vegetables daily — can significantly improve your slumber, researchers at the University of Chicago and Columbia University have found. Their 2025 findings, published in the journal *Sleep Health*, showed a clear link between diet quality and sleep depth, with participants who met their daily recommended allowance of fruits and vegetables noting a 16 percent boost in sleep quality.

13. Don't eat right before bed

Studies have found that eating foods within 3 hours of bedtime can increase disrupted sleep. "I personally recommend to my patients to try to eat by 6 or 7 at night, and then just don't eat after that," says Dr. Beth Malow, professor of neurology and pediatrics at the Vanderbilt Sleep Division. If you do have a late-night snack, make it a light one, like a cup of yogurt, Malow suggests. "If you have something heavy in your body, it can not only interfere with feeling comfortable enough to go to sleep, but it can also cause esophageal reflux," she says.

14. Try skipping naps

If you must take a daily nap, limit it to 15-20 minutes. Every person has a maximum number of hours their body likes to sleep per 24-hour time frame, and if you tap into that total for daytime naps, your nighttime sleep may suffer, says Dr. Mohan Dutt, a sleep specialist with ProMedica Physicians in Michigan. If you have a habit of napping at a certain time or place each day, say in your recliner after lunch, switch up your routine and add a walk at that time to avoid the temptation.

15. Exercise your brain and your body

Getting adequate daily exercise improves overall sleep quality and can help you fall asleep more quickly. Research has shown that getting just 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week can alleviate chronic insomnia, with exercises like [yoga](#), tai chi, and walking or jogging showing the greatest positive effects on sleep quality. “I like to say exercise is the best sleeping pill,” Roth says. “I very much advocate for people who have retired to find ways to stay mentally or physically active during the day.” To give your body a chance to wind down and avoid disruptions to sleep quality, complete any strenuous exercise at least four hours before you plan to go to sleep, research suggests.

16. Have a reason to wake up

To help build a healthier routine — and a more consistent sleep schedule — devise fun reasons to get up and get going in the morning. “You need a purpose or motivation to get out of bed,” says Dr. Rafael Pelayo, a sleep medicine specialist with Stanford Health Care and author of *How to Sleep: The New Science-Based Solutions for Sleeping Through the Night*. “Plan a regular breakfast or coffee outing with friends or an exercise walk with others,” Pelayo says. “It’s a great way to stay connected and give purpose to your morning.”

17. Wear nasal strips for better breathing

Over-the-counter nasal strips such as Breathe Right or Clear Passage, or nasal dilators like AIRMAX Nasal Dilators, can help keep your nasal passages open, meaning less snoring and stuffiness, two things that can lead to less-than-stellar sleep. While strips may help reduce nighttime awakenings and improve daytime functioning, it is important to rule out disorders such as [sleep apnea](#), which usually can’t be adequately treated by nasal strips.

18 Give breathing exercises a whirl

Although there’s not much data behind this technique, you can try it to see if it helps calm you. The 4-7-8 breath, which was developed by integrative medicine physician and author Dr. Andrew Weil, is a form of rhythmic breathing in yoga called pranayama. Keep your tongue behind your upper front teeth for both inhaling and exhaling. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a “whoosh” sound. Breathe in through your nose to the count of 4. Then hold your breath to the count of 7. Exhale through your mouth again, making another “whoosh” sound, counting to 8. Only do this for four rounds, and practice it twice (at a minimum) daily for four weeks [for best results](#).

19. Consider red light therapy

While there’s currently no large-scale scientific evidence regarding the effectiveness of red light therapy in enhancing sleep duration or quality, some small-scale studies suggest that before-bed exposure to red light via a mask, lamp, wand or therapy wrap might yield positive results for some.

One clinical study of 30 adults published in 2023, for example, found that [red light therapy users reported improvements in sleep](#), as well as a boost in overall relaxation and mood. But the researchers note that more work is needed.

20. Sleep on your side

If you have trouble falling asleep due to gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) — associated with heartburn, indigestion and acid reflux — sleeping on your left side might help. That position can reduce acid backflow into the esophagus, leading to reduced indigestion. Slightly elevating the head of the bed or using a foam wedge to keep your head higher than your chest may also help relieve GERD symptoms. If you're new to side sleeping, consider placing pillows between your knees for added comfort and to ease pressure on your lower back and hips.

CREATE A HAVEN FOR SLEEPING



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21. Create a sleep retreat

“When you start thinking about your [bedroom differently](#), and you treat it as a recovery room or a sleep sanctuary, it helps shift your mindset around the products you're going to put in there,” says JD Velilla, cofounder and CEO of OpenAir Pillow, which promotes side sleeping. Keep your bedroom comfortable and inviting by clearing out clutter, and add a spa-like feel to your sleep space with calming scents like lavender, which has been shown to support sleep quality.

22. Turn the temperature down

It's easier to sleep restfully in a cool room than in a hot one, science shows. For optimal sleep quality, the National Sleep Foundation suggests targeting a room temperature around 65 degrees Fahrenheit. "There's no magical, exact ideal temperature, but you should feel cold," Singh says. "Cooler is better. If you're feeling the need to pull up a comforter, that's good."

23. Try cooling natural fiber sheets

If you're waking up covered in sweat, opt for sheets made from natural fibers such as cotton and linen, which are the most breathable and cooling. Or try percale sheets with a thread count of 200 or higher. Additionally, look for "moisture-wicking" sheets made from a material that effectively wicks away sweat. Tencel and bamboo may also work for you. Try sleeping on a buckwheat pillow, which is more cooling than traditional latex or down, advises Shelby Harris, a New York-based psychologist who specializes in behavioral sleep medicine.

24. Shut down — and out — light

Light plays a big role in our [circadian rhythm](#), which is why it's important to have a dark bedroom for sleep. Light can also elevate your heart rate and increase insulin resistance. Turn off the internal lights, and if there's light outside, hang dark curtains or blackout shades.

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25. Add ambient noise

It's often noise that disrupts sleep: outside traffic or sirens, barking dogs or apartment neighbors. To drown out the racket, consider investing in a white noise machine (which starts around \$15) or using a relaxing sleep-sounds app. White noise is recommended, but try other sonic hues, such as pink, brown or black. Multiple apps offer both free and subscription-based options featuring sounds that may induce slumber. White Noise Deep Sleep Sounds (iOS and Android) includes cricket, rain and ocean sounds. The app myNoise (iOS and Android) generates ambient sounds. And BetterSleep (iOS and Android) features bedtime stories and meditations along with multiple sounds.

26. Find your pain points

Recognize what's interrupting your z's. Are you too hot? Is the room too bright? Is the bedding scratching you? Are your neck and back uncomfortable? Jot the sources of your interruptions down. Then systematically address these issues via trial and error. Introduce softer sheets or lighter, more breathable bedding. Sample a new style of pillow. Try dialing back your room temperature. Add blackout shades to the window or remove other sources of light. "Look at your sleep environment and notice what disturbs you," Velilla says. "If something wakes you in the middle of the night, write it down and then see if you can find a product or solution for it."

27. Save your bed for sleep and sex

If you read, work, scroll or watch TV in bed, you may inadvertently be sabotaging an easy path to sleep. Roth and Dutt agree: Your bed should be reserved only for sleep and intimacy. When you don't draw the line, your "mind starts to associate the bed as a place where you do other things, as opposed to a place where you sleep," Dutt says. If your sleep quality has been suffering, move your pre-sleep wind-down routine to the living room, and head to the bedroom only when you feel ready to close your eyes.

28. Don't go to bed if you're not sleepy

Building on this idea, don't head to bed — even if it is your usual bedtime — if you're not feeling ready for sleep. "Never get into bed with the hope that you're going to become sleepy. That's Sleep 101. It's the most foundational recommendation I give," Roth says. "We don't go stand in front of the refrigerator with the hope that we're going to get hungry. Rather, we feel hungry, and then we act on it. It should be the same with sleep: You should feel sleepy and act on it." If you're struggling to feel sleepy, try meditating or taking a soothing bath, then head to bed when you feel ready to doze off.

29. Take a warm bath

"There is some truth to the old adage that a warm bath or shower may facilitate better sleep," Troxel says. "One of the key signals to our brain that it is time for sleep is a drop in core body temperature, and a warm bath or shower is not only relaxing and a good way to unwind before bedtime, but when you get out of the warm water, it causes a drop in core body temperature, which sends a signal to the brain that it is time for sleep."

30. Try a weighted blanket

Many have found extra comfort in using a weighted blanket, which can contain glass beads, plastic pellets, ball bearings, rice, grain, beans or sand. They weigh 5 to 30 pounds and cost \$25 or more, depending on weight, fabric type, size and filler material. "Weighted blankets provide a gentle, even pressure and a sensation of deep touch, which sometimes helps improve sleep, especially in people with sensory issues," Afolabi-Brown says. "It has been found to decrease restlessness in people struggling to stay still during sleep."

31. Try a glass of warm milk

Though the evidence about the use of warm milk to optimize sleep is limited and mixed, there are some indications of benefits, according to Afolabi-Brown. "Milk contains tryptophan, an amino acid involved in serotonin and melatonin production, both of which play key roles in regulating the sleep-wake cycle," she says. "The warmth of the milk may also have a comforting and soothing effect." Don't overdo or you'll be getting up in the night to go to the bathroom.

32. Give yourself an off-ramp to sleep

Try the approach known as the “power-down hour,” which recommends 20 minutes doing tasks before bed; 20 minutes on brushing teeth, flossing and other hygiene; then 20 minutes doing something relaxing, like reading or listening to a mindfulness app. Singh calls this building a “ramp” to sleep — or, in another analogy, he likens it to arriving at the airport early for your flight. “Sleep is not a switch,” he says. “It’s like a flight. If you have a 10 p.m. flight, you’re not arriving at the airport at 10 p.m.”

33. Put the electronics away

Blue light from electronics before bedtime can interfere with your body’s natural circadian rhythm and sleep cycles. “For people very sensitive to blue light — which is essentially the same wavelength that’s emitted by the sun — light from TVs and phones and tablets can kind of trick the brain into thinking that it’s still daytime,” Dutt says. If you’re having trouble sleeping well, he recommends cutting off your screen time at least 2 hours before bedtime.

34. Watch a rerun

If you simply can’t give up your presleep screen habit, Dietch and Roth offer a loophole: Gravitate toward reruns on late-night TV. “It’s more about the function of the behavior. You probably don’t want to scroll Facebook or Twitter or a news site before bed, because that’s going to get you revved up,” Dietch says. “But if you’re playing sudoku or watching reruns of *Friends*, I don’t have a problem with it.” Roth agrees: “I’m absolutely OK with reruns of old TV shows, because it’s like comfort food,” she says.

35. Find alternatives to doomscrolling

Overindulging on news and social media apps before bed is one of the worst things you can do if a good night’s sleep is your goal. “How we view the world impacts how we sleep and our mental health,” says Malow. Put away your phone an hour before bed and opt instead for activities like meditation, working a puzzle or journaling.

36. Explore a sleep-inducing podcast

Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR), a pleasurable, tingling sensation stemming from sounds like whispers or tapping, can lead to increased feelings of calm and relaxation, [which could aid in falling asleep](#), studies have shown. Podcasts focused on triggering ASMR often feature calm and gentle narration to “shift listeners’ attention away from external noise as well as their own intrusive, alerting thoughts, to make it easier to fall asleep,” says Craig Richard, a professor of physiology at Shenandoah University School of Pharmacy and ASMR expert. (His [TED Talk about ASMR](#) has been viewed more than 2 million times.)

Find ASMR-friendly podcasts that promote falling asleep by searching for terms like “relaxing,” “sleep stories” or “sleep podcasts” on any podcast platform, Richard suggests. Some of his favorites include Calm History, Sleep With Me and Relax With Slow Norwegian.

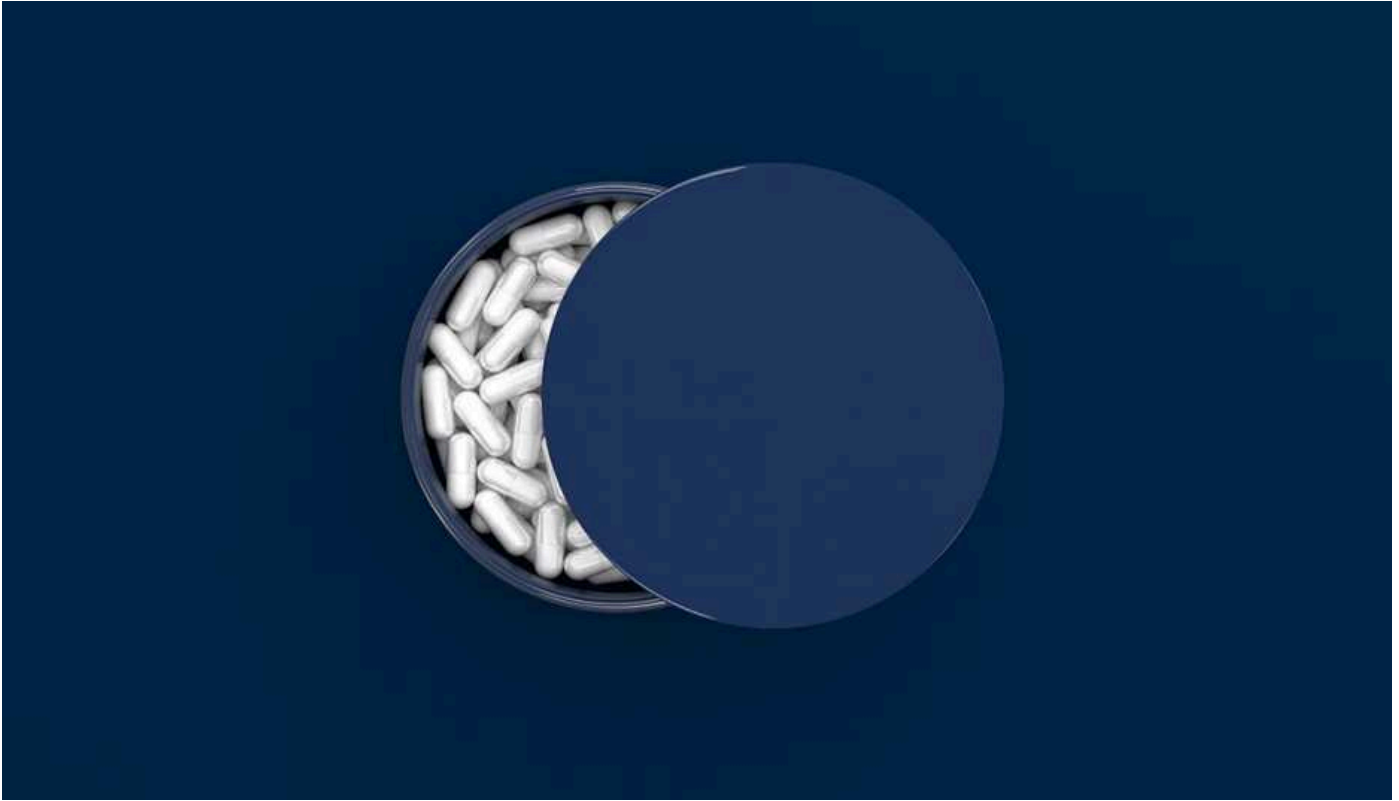
37. Schedule anxious thoughts

If you're a person whose thoughts tend to run crazy, carve out time earlier in your day to write them down or act on them. “I call it [scheduled worry time](#),” Roth says. By addressing your mental checklist earlier in the evening, you'll feel more proactive because you can still address or tend to some of them (clothes moved to the dryer, check). If you're having trouble shutting off spiraling thoughts, get up and do something. Read for a few minutes. Do some stretching. Listen to a sleep app. Redirect your mind elsewhere until you feel ready for sleep. “People often ask me, ‘How do I turn off my brain when I get into bed?’” Roth says. “I flip that and say, ‘Don't get into bed if your brain is doing that.’ If your mind is racing, it means you weren't sleepy enough to get into bed.”

38. Keep Fido and Fifi off the bed

Roughly [46 percent of pet owners](#) admit to sharing a bed with their pets, according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. In truth, there are both pros and cons to letting your pets sleep with you. While having your dog or cat close by may be a comfort, bed-sharing with them can affect your ability to get quality sleep. A 2024 study by researchers at Trinity College in Connecticut found that people who co-sleep with pets experience poorer sleep quality and higher rates of insomnia than those who keep their beds pet-free. Sleep experts like Troxel recommend you compromise by [giving pets their own separate](#), comfortable sleeping space in your bedroom, so your bed stays a human-only sleep sanctuary.

WHEN YOU'RE STRUGGLING



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39. Recognize shifting sleep patterns

“People tend to have 2 to 3 percent less deep sleep per decade [of age],” Benjamin says. “Plus, as people get older, they tend to take longer to fall asleep.” Some sleep pattern shifts are normal, but if you frequently feel tired or sleepy during the day, take steps to regain control of your sleep rhythms. “You should make sleep health part of your routine conversations with your physician at your annual wellness checkups,” Singh says.

40. Get checked for sleep apnea

If you snore loudly or gasp for air, ask your doctor if you could have sleep apnea, a potentially serious disorder that disrupts breathing. “Not everyone who snores has sleep apnea, but it’s a pretty good indicator,” Dutt says. Though obstructive sleep apnea commonly affects men and those with a high body mass index, anyone can have it, Roth says. Your physician may send you to a lab for an overnight sleep test or order an at-home sleep apnea test as a first step in screening you for the condition. Don’t let embarrassment prevent you from seeking an evaluation. Left untreated, sleep apnea can lead to a host of health problems, including diabetes, stroke and heart attacks.

41. Research sleep apnea treatment options

If you're diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea, talk with your physician about available treatments, which, along with proven, longstanding CPAP machines, now also include the FDA-approved implants Inspire and Genio. These newer devices treat sleep apnea by sending mild electrical impulses to the hypoglossal nerve, which controls the tongue, to keep your airways open while you sleep.

For now, Pristas does not advise his patients to forego their CPAP for an implant, particularly if the CPAP is working for them. “[The implant] is something you're putting in your body, and you have to be sure that you want to go down that road,” he says. Pristas expects the FDA to approve new oral medications for the treatment of sleep apnea, as these drugs are currently in the final stages of clinical trials, though it will likely be years before they hit the market. Pristas also cautioned that any medication can bring along side effects that are often less intolerable as we age, like glaucoma, heart arrhythmias and prostate issues.

For other effective treatments beyond the CPAP, consider consulting with a qualified dentist. The FDA has cleared more than 200 oral devices to treat sleep apnea, and research has shown that oral dental appliances can be an effective first-line treatment for some patients. Oral devices vary in style, including some that open airways by bringing the lower jaw forward and others that reposition the tongue, so it's critical to work with a qualified specialist — someone vetted through the Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine — who can help select the type of appliance that will work best for each patient, says Kevin Postol, DDS, who treats patients with sleep apnea and TMJ in greater St. Louis and serves as president of the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine.

42. Time your medications

The timing of your [prescriptions and supplements](#) can affect your sleep. Some, such as diuretics for blood pressure, can lead to more nighttime trips to the bathroom, says Dr. Karl Doghramji, director of the Jefferson Sleep Disorders Center in Philadelphia. Others, including antidepressant SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors), can energize or sedate. Ask your doctor about the best time to take your meds.

43. Don't use antihistamines to sleep

Although taking the antihistamine Benadryl or its generic, diphenhydramine, often has the welcome side effect of drowsiness, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine does not recommend relying on them as a sleep aid. Typically the sleep isn't quality, and antihistamines' other side effects — altered mental state, urinary retention, constipation and dry mouth — can lead to more problems.

44. Look closely at sleep supplements

Don't take [melatonin](#), magnesium, ashwagandha or other herbal, nutritional or hormonal supplements marketed as sleep aids without talking to your doctor first. While such products are widely available over the counter and may help some sleep, they aren't entirely without risk.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine has recommended caution around the use of melatonin, pointing to research — including one 2025 study from the [American Heart Association](#) — suggesting that long-term melatonin use can lead to increased risk for heart problems. Though some studies suggest supplements like magnesium and ashwagandha may aid in sleep in the short-term, there's currently not enough scientific evidence to establish their long-term safety and efficacy, says Weiss. Finally, because the purity and quality of over-the-counter supplements can vary widely, be sure to reach for a reputable brand that is US Pharmacopeia (USP)-verified if you opt to use one occasionally, suggests Malow. (Look for a USP-verified logo on the bottle.)

45. Be aware of marijuana's side effects

Some studies have suggested that products with tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC — the main psychoactive compound in marijuana, or cannabis — can help some people fall asleep faster, on a short-term basis. However, available research suggests that with long-term and/or heavy use of cannabis products, sleep quality may actually decline. That's because long-term use of THC may disrupt deep sleep stages, leading to less efficient sleep and more awakenings overnight for some people. One 2025 study published in the journal *Sleep*, for example, found that participants who used cannabis daily [reported "more fragmented sleep,"](#) including greater rates of disrupted sleep and lower sleep efficiency, than the non-cannabis users in the sample.

46. Understand CBD

Before using CBD gummies, CBD oils or other products with cannabidiol — a naturally occurring compound in cannabis that does not cause a high — discuss with your doctor. One 2025 study in the *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine* found that use of CBD ["may have the potential"](#) to provide a safe and efficacious alternative to over-the-counter sleep aids." But more long-term studies are needed, and using CBD is not without risk. Known side effects include nausea, fatigue and irritability, and CBD can also react negatively to some prescription drug regimens because it slows the liver's ability to break down certain medications. Be sure to get the all-clear from your doctor before starting any form of CBD as a sleep aid.

47. Get your eyes checked

If you're experiencing erratic sleep patterns, such as falling asleep early in the evening, cataracts could be the culprit. "Folks who have cataracts don't get as much light coming into their eyes. So there's not a strong signal to the brain that it's still daylight out, and they may fall asleep a little

earlier,” Pelayo explains. Get your eyes checked and consider cataract correction surgery if needed. Studies have shown that patients sleep better and have improved circadian rhythms after cataract surgery.

48. Be cautious about prescription sleep aids

Following guidelines set by the American Geriatrics Society, most physicians avoid prescribing sleep aids for patients over 65 because these drugs are associated with an increased risk for falls, which are especially dangerous for older adults, Dutt says.

Long-term use of prescription sleep aids has been linked to potential health side effects, including hallucinations, cardiovascular disease and an increased risk of cancer. Additionally, several recent studies have suggested that long-term use of sleep medications could elevate your risk of developing dementia. “If you find yourself reaching for these bottles every night, it’s time to have a talk with a professional,” Singh says.

49. Don’t just toss and turn

If you can’t sleep, don’t just lie there. Tossing and turning or staring anxiously at the clock will just make things worse. Do a mindless chore, such as folding clothes. Then, when you feel drowsy, go back to bed. “You want to avoid any time in bed that you’re not sleeping,” Dutt says.

50. Don’t try all the tips at once

Rather than following the current trend of “sleepmaxxing” — the process of adopting all the trending sleep hacks at once (think white noise machine, plus sleep mask, melatonin and so on) — try them one at a time so you can see which works best for you. Then you can see if pairing them improves your sleep even more.

51. Look at your daytime habits

Take a closer look at your daytime routine, starting with the quality of foods you’re eating and how much you’re moving during the day. “Sleep, exercise and diet are all interrelated,” Pristas says. Be sure to take steps throughout the day to support your mental health, whether that’s a walk outside during your lunch break or bricking out your phone after work to take a break from emails. “The way that we live our lives from the time that we wake up until we go to bed, those things are going to influence how well and how restorative our sleep is,” agrees Weiss.

52. Skip the mouth tape

While social media influencers praise this approach as a way of promoting nasal breathing as you sleep, you shouldn’t try mouth taping without guidance from your doctor. If you’re experiencing snoring and/or a dry mouth while you sleep — two main reasons people gravitate to mouth taping

— you should note these symptoms and talk with a health professional to get tested for sleep apnea, Weiss says.

53. Don't 'bed-rot'

Another popular social media trend focuses on so-called “bed-rotting:” staying in bed all day to make up for a recent lack of sleep. “It’s that thought of, ‘Well, last night I only slept four hours, so now I’m going to spend 10 hours in bed today to compensate for that,’” says Weiss. But this combination of sleep deprivation and staying in bed — whether you sleep or not — all day is far harder on your body than staying on a regular sleep routine. “That inconsistency is worse,” Weiss says. “It creates a kind of social jet lag and forces your biological clock to work with multiple different times for wake-up and bedtime.”

54. Consider ‘sleep divorcing’

If you have a partner who keeps you up at night, consider alternative sleeping arrangements, Troxel says. That could mean separate beds or separate bedrooms. “While there is no evidence that a ‘sleep divorce’ can lead you to an actual divorce, there is strong evidence that sleepless nights can lead to relationship strife,” she says. “So, for your own health and the health of your relationship, be open to discussing the sleeping strategy that will work best for your partner and you.”

55. Remember that sleep is a skill

Take heart in knowing that you can improve your sleep quality. “It’s a skill to sleep well,” Roth says. “We can learn to get better at it.” Try not to get caught up in a cycle of frustration, which will make things worse. “Sleep is one of those things that the harder you try to grasp onto it, the more it can elude you,” Dietch says. Singh agrees: “If you have poor sleep, you start worrying about not sleeping well, and that begets more poor sleep. You have to break those rhythms.”

56. Find a tailored solution

Your neighbors swear by their white noise machine. Your brother-in-law insists an orthopedic pillow is the key to blissful sleep. Even the guy at the gym had an idea to share when you mentioned you’ve had trouble sleeping. You’ve likely heard them all. But be aware: Sleep routines that work for others may not work for you right away. Use trial and error to discover the wind-down activities and bedroom ambiance settings that best fit your own sleep style. “Sleep behaviors and sleep skills are not a one-size-fits-all thing. They’re very individual,” Roth says. “Sometimes the solution has to be very tailored to you and your own needs.”

57. Look at other health issues

Restless leg syndrome, which is more common in older adults and frequently occurs at night, could keep you from sleeping. [Menopause](#), chronic pain, a [stressful or traumatic experience](#), depression and more can all affect your sleep, and the root cause of insomnia may be one or many factors. If you're experiencing difficulty sleeping, don't dismiss the issue. The number of health conditions linked to poor or inadequate sleep is almost endless, with obesity, diabetes and heart disease topping the list. Your overall health depends on getting quality sleep, so talk to your primary care physician if you've experienced any recent changes in your life that might be affecting your slumber.

58. Advocate for answers

If you struggle with chronic insomnia or another sleep disorder such as sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome or narcolepsy, don't put off seeking more advanced, professional help. Sleep specialists can steer you to an appropriate treatment. In the case of insomnia, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT-I) is particularly effective. Studies have shown 50 to 75 percent of CBT-I participants experienced improved overall sleep quality after treatment. "It works amazingly well, and yet so many people don't know about it," Dietch says. To find someone trained in CBT-I, search for sleep psychologists or dedicated sleep clinics in your area.

Find Your Best Sleep Position

Video: Find Your Best Sleep Position

AARP Contributor Robin Roenker is a longtime health and wellness reporter. Her writing has also appeared in USA TODAY, Southern Living, Health Progress and other national and regional publications. Aatif M. Husain, M.D., is a board-certified neurologist and sleep medicine physician and chief of the Division of Epilepsy, Sleep, and Clinical Neurophysiology at Duke University Medical Center. He has expertise in neurology, sleep medicine, epilepsy and clinical neurophysiology.

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All Comments

1. Comment by KellyL516947.

I'd like to know if there's any advice as to how to increase my "deep" sleep. My sleep pattern is in place, and I'm getting 7 to 8 hours a night. According to AI, 25% of my sleep should be deep sleep, but I'm nowhere close to that. It varies from 5-13% and no more.

2. **Comment by doris13.**

I've had insomnia my entire life. My mom used to tell me that I screamed just about 24/7 for the first 6 months. I remember insomnia from my preteens on. I had a hard time getting to sleep and staying asleep. From my 50s on, I was up to the bathroom 1-4 times a night. My dr would prescribe 30 ambiens every 6 months for the most desperate nights. The things that have helped me the most are 1) red and far infrared light therapy - I now sleep a solid 5-7 hours without needing to go to the bathroom at all during the night. 2) theta and delta wave binaural beats - I listen while reading in bed and I start to pass out quickly. When I roll over, I go to sleep easily. 3) a picture of my mom holding me when I was about 1 year old - When I have a hard time shutting my mind off, I see that picture in my mind and everything calms down. 4) folate for restless legs - my naturopath suggested that I increase my folate intake from the 1600 mcg to 2400mcg daily. My restless legs that I'd had for over 30 years decreased by 95% at least. 5) I drink a lot of water but no fluids at all after 8pm. I hope this helps someone.

3. **Comment by LisaM546431.**

Thank you, this was very informative

4. **Comment by rc47033656.**

Thanks God, I'm so lucky!! When I go to bed I just get asleep immediately. From 11:30 PM to 7:00 AM. Never had a sleeping problem. Sometimes I listen to music for 15 minutes if I'm not sleepy and that works.

Reply by Not Provided.

I also have no problems sleeping

5. Comment by SaraW454904.

I retired about a year ago and really haven't settled into a good routine yet. The days a friend asks me to walk are the best so far as I have a reason to sleep and then to get up. The days we don't walk and I don't have anything in my schedule to get up for aren't as good. I have more trouble getting to sleep the night before....thinking, thinking, thinking. I like the idea of the thinking before bed and will try that. Also, maybe I just need to put something in my calendar every day so I have a reason to get up.....thoughts?

- **Reply by tomcello.**

Get a dog! They are great companions and you have to get out several times per day for their exercise and potty needs and your need for light and exercise. And shelters are full of dogs who would love to share your home and your love.

- **Reply by ChemlabLady.**

Yes get a puppy. Or volunteer to raise little puppies or kittens for your local shelter. Getting up for those 3 AM feedings will make you get out of bed. Volunteering for anything will give you something to do. Depending on your interests, you could work in a shelter, be an aid in a hospital, help out a service like meals on wheels. Helping anyone less fortunate will improve your mood.