

# How Well Do You Sleep?

A Guide to Getting the Best Sleep Possible

## BEST POSITIONS FOR SLEEP

**On your back:** Sleeping on your back makes it easy for your head, neck and spine to maintain a neutral position.

**On your side:** Side-sleeping is great for overall health--it reduces snoring and keeps your spine elongated. If you suffer from acid reflux, this is the next best thing to sleeping on your back.

## WORST POSITIONS FOR SLEEP

**Fetal position:** When you snooze with your knees pulled up high and chin tucked into your chest, you may feel it in the morning, especially if you have an arthritic back or joints

**On your stomach:** This position puts pressure on joints and muscles, which can irritate nerves and lead to pain, numbness and tingling

# 10 Tips for a Better Night's Sleep

- 1. Eat right, sleep tight.** Try not to go to bed hungry, but avoid heavy meals before bedtime. Foods that may help promote sleep include milk tuna, halibut, pumpkin, artichokes, avocados, almonds, eggs, bok choy, peaches, walnuts, apricots, oats, asparagus, potatoes, buckwheat, and bananas.
- 2. Restrict nicotine.** Nicotine can keep you up and awaken you at night. It should be avoided particularly near bedtime and if you wake up in the middle of the night.
- 3. Cut caffeine.** If you drink a cup of coffee in the afternoon and are still tossing at night, caffeine might be the reason. Cutting out caffeine at least four to six hours before bedtime can help you fall asleep easier.

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- 4. Avoid alcohol as a sleep aid.** Alcohol may initially help you fall asleep, but it also causes disturbances in sleep resulting in less restful sleep. An alcoholic drink before bedtime may make it more likely that you will wake up during the night. Dark wines and liquors seem to have a stronger affect on insomnia.
- 5. Avoid napping.** If you do nap, keep it short. 15 to 20 minutes is optimal.
- 6. Keep pets off the bed.** Does your pet sleep with you? This, too, may cause you to awaken during the night, either from allergies or pet movements.
- 7. Avoid watching TV, eating, and discussing emotional issues in bed.**

# 10 Tips for a Better Night's Sleep

- 8. Exercise at the right time for you.** If you are the type of person who gets energized or becomes more alert after exercise, it may be best not to exercise in the evening. Regular exercise in the morning even can help relieve insomnia.
- 9. Keep your bedroom quiet, dark, and comfortable.** Use earplugs, window blinds or curtains, and an electric blanket or air conditioner everything possible to create an ideal sleep environment. Ideal room temperatures for sleeping are between 68 and 72 degrees Fahrenheit. Temperatures above 75, or below 54 can disrupt sleep.

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- 10. Relax before bedtime.** Stress not only makes you miserable, it wreaks havoc on your sleep. Develop some kind of pre-sleep ritual to break the connection between all the day's stress and bedtime. These rituals can be as short as 10 minutes or as long as an hour. Take a bubble bath, bubbles provide insulation that keeps the water hotter. It doesn't just relax your muscles. It raises your core temperature. Then when you get out, your temperature drops, which helps you produce melatonin. And sprinkle in some lavender oil, which is known to help relaxation.

# If You're Still Having Trouble Falling Asleep

**Don't stress.** Try not to stress over the fact that you can't get back to sleep, because that very stress encourages your body to stay awake.

**Make relaxation your goal, not sleep.** Try a relaxation technique such as deep breathing or meditation, which can be done without getting out of bed. Remind yourself that although they're not a replacement for sleep, rest and relaxation still help rejuvenate your body.

**Do a quiet, non-stimulating activity.** If you've been awake for more than 15 minutes, try getting out of bed and doing a non-stimulating activity, such as reading a book. Keep the lights dim so as not to cue your body clock that it's time to wake up, and avoid TV and computer screens.

**Postpone worrying.** If you wake during the night feeling anxious about something, make a brief note of it on paper and postpone worrying about it until the next day when you are fresh and it will be easier to resolve.

# What is Sleep Apnea?

## **Sleep Apnea**

Sleep apnea is a sleep disorder that occurs when a person's breathing is interrupted during sleep. People with untreated sleep apnea stop breathing repeatedly during their sleep, sometimes hundreds of times. This means the brain -- and the rest of the body -- may not get enough oxygen.



# Effects of Sleep Apnea

## **What Are the Effects of Sleep Apnea?**

If left untreated, sleep apnea can result in a growing number of health problems including:

- High blood pressure
- Stroke
- Heart failure, irregular heart beats, and heart attacks
- Diabetes
- Depression
- Worsening of ADHD

In addition, untreated sleep apnea may be responsible for poor performance in everyday activities, such as at work and school, motor vehicle crashes, as well as academic underachievement in children and adolescents.

# What Should I Do If I Think I Have Sleep Apnea?

**Visit a sleep specialist for a sleep study. The [Sleep Medicine Centers of WNY](#) now offers in-home sleep studies!**

**As a result of the sleep study, you might be prescribed a CPAP Machine.**

## **Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP)**

Continuous positive airway pressure -- also called CPAP -- is a treatment in which a mask is worn over the nose and/or mouth while you sleep. The mask is hooked up to a machine that delivers a continuous flow of air into the nostrils. The positive pressure from air flowing into the nostrils helps keep the airways open so that breathing is not impaired. CPAP is considered by many experts to be the most effective treatment for sleep apnea .



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# Take a Sleep Self-Assessment Test

- The taking of this test and the results obtained in no way substitutes for a medical assessment or diagnostic procedure, but serves as a useful guide to help focus future searches and discussions.
- Take the online test here:
  - <http://www.talkaboutsleee.com/app/index.cfm?fuseaction=sleepQuiz.view>

# Websites

National Sleep Foundation  
[www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)

Sleep Medicine Centers of WNY  
<http://www.sleepmedicinecenters.com/>

Manhattan Snoring and Sleep Center  
<http://nycsnoringspecialist.reachlocal.net/>

Helpguide.org  
<http://helpguide.org/>

Talk About Sleep  
<http://www.talkaboutsleeeep.com/>

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