

# Holiday De-Stress Guide

## Week 5: Healthy Sleep over the Holidays



Eating well, being active, and getting enough sleep are all strategies you should adopt at any time. And, during the holidays, when the pressures of the season add up, it is important to take some time to look after yourself. It seems almost impossible to get enough sleep, but it is worth working on.

**7 hours** per night is the **minimum** amount needed for most people for good health

### The Power of Sleep



You may sacrifice sleep in order to complete your shopping, decorating, cooking, and other holiday preparations. But, a lack of sleep can reduce your ability to enjoy the season. It may be harder to embrace rewarding relationships, joys of the season, and nearly impossible to retain memories you would like to keep forever.

The quality of your sleep directly affects the quality of your waking life, including mental sharpness, productivity, emotional balance, creativity, and body weight.

### What happens if I don't get enough sleep?

- Inability to cope with stress
- Memory is impaired
- Impaired motor skills
- Increased risk of accidents
- Moodiness and irritability
- Reduced creativity and problem-solving skills
- Weight gain
- Reduced immunity

**Did you know?** Decreasing sleep by **1.5 hours** for just **one night** reduces day time alertness by about **one-third!**

### Give Yourself the Gift of Sleep

Poor sleep habits that develop during the holidays can persist long after the stress, chaos, and excitement are over. Good sleep habits will help keep your exercise routine on track and ward off weight gain, helping you start the New Year off on the right foot.

### Be kind to your body – give yourself the gift of sleep this holiday season.

1. **Connect with friends and family:** Spending quality time with significant others is an effective way to de-stress, preparing you for a good night's rest.



2. **Take a laughter break:** Watch a funny holiday comedy or read a funny book. Humour is a great way to ease stress and prepare for rest.

3. **Fit in a seasonal siesta:** Naps can't substitute for a good night's sleep, but a short (one hour or less) midday nap may reduce your sleep debt, boost your productivity, and refresh your day. **Tip:** avoid long naps or naps close to bed time.



4. **Be physically active daily:** Exercise helps reduce stress and allows you to relax. Exercise can reduce the time it takes to fall asleep by 12 minutes and increases total sleep time by 42 min. Some people have no trouble falling asleep after exercising and some find it too stimulating. Experiment (before the holidays) to see what works best for you. Be active with friends or family: build a snowman, hit the slopes, or take a stroll through a park.

5. **Stick to your regular sleep routine:** Travelling, hosting out-of-town guests and a busy agenda may make your holiday schedule hard to predict. Set aside one hour each night to relax and prepare for sleep. Customary pre-sleep rituals, such as a warm bath or a few minutes of reading can help ensure you get a good sleep.

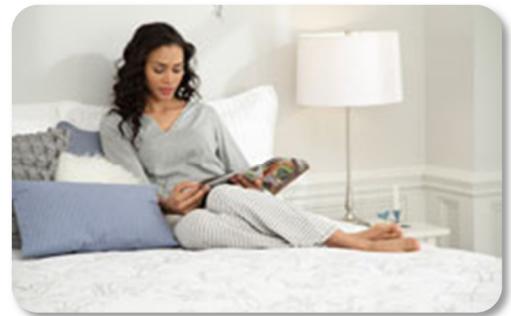
6. **Maintain habits that encourage good "sleep hygiene":** Try to go to bed and get out of bed at the same time each day, use your bed only for sleep, and only spend the amount of time you want to sleep in bed.



7. **Alcohol can make holiday insomnia worse:** Many people are prone to drinking a bit more alcohol during the holidays. Alcohol may initially help you get to sleep, but it often wakes you up hours later when it leaves your bloodstream. Avoid alcohol 4-6 hours before sleep.

8. **Avoid caffeinated beverages 6 to 8 hours before bedtime:** Caffeine is a stimulant that can inhibit your sleeping pattern.

9. **Avoid a heavy meal before bedtime:** Have your last meal of the day at least 2 to 3 hours before sleep. This will limit digestive upset.



10. **Don't stay in bed too long if awake:** If you can't fall asleep within 15 to 20 minutes after turning out the lights, it is best to get up out of bed and do another relaxing, non-stimulating activity, such as reading. Once you feel sleepy, return to bed.

11. **Make your sleeping area conducive to healthy rest:** Your sleeping area should be quiet, dark, comfortable and cool. A TV or computer in the room may be a distraction. Leave your stress and worries of the day in another room.

**Resources:** [www.besthealthmag.com](http://www.besthealthmag.com), [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org).