

# SLEEP WELL

## Fundamental Principles of Optimal Sleep Health



Sleep is important. [Research](#) shows that when we do not get good sleep, we are at risk for a host of problems, ranging from difficulty concentrating to chronic health issues. Getting enough sleep is one of the most overlooked aspects in discussions about health. While we recognize its importance, it can be a challenge in our busy world, which may explain why we tend to simply accept being sleep-deprived. Let's look at some basics when it comes to building the best sleep.

### The 5 principles of good sleep health



#### Value your sleep

When we break life down to the basics, what really keeps us going? Oxygen, water, and food are definitely at the top of the list, but sleep joins the ranks as a vital ingredient for our ability to function. It's the behind-the-scenes hero, supporting everything from the repair of our body's tissues, our metabolism, our physical growth, our ability to fight infection, our learning and memory, and our ability to regulate emotions. The first step to establishing healthy sleep is that you need to take sleep seriously. Not getting enough can interfere with your health in the long run. So, you can't treat sleep like it's optional. Value sleep as highly as fresh water, good food, and the air you breathe.

#### Prioritize your sleep

Once you acknowledge the value of sleep, you must commit to it and set goals that facilitate sleep. Prioritizing sleep isn't just about good intentions. It's about putting sleep first, or at least higher on the list when choosing how you spend your time. Trust your body and brain if they're telling you, it's time to rest. This may mean letting go of things you want to do in favour of some shut-eye. It can be difficult to put into practice especially when you can't control certain factors. You may work shifts or be caring for a loved one. Such situations emphasize the need to prioritize sleep when you do have the opportunity to do so.

#### Personalize your sleep

When it comes to better sleep, you may wonder how much is enough. It's a common question, and it brings up another: Is quality of sleep as important as quantity? To answer this, you need to figure out what your own body needs. It's like finding the right shoes - you try different ones until you find what fits best. So, how do you know how much sleep you need? Try spending a little more time in bed or a little less. Also, think about whether you're more of a night person or a morning person - that matters too. By figuring out what suits you best in terms of both how much and when you sleep, you'll likely find your sleep quality improves along the way.

#### Trust your sleep

Experiment with finding the right time and duration, and let your natural sleep pattern fall into place. Wake up at the same time each morning to help your body establish a reliable routine. When you find a rhythm, go with it rather than trying to control it. Successful sleepers don't have special tricks - they simply trust that sleep will come. Avoid the stress of trying too many things; it usually backfires. If sleep eludes you, get up and try again when you feel sleepy. Remember, you can continue to adjust your routine to get it right. If you like, keep a record of what works and what doesn't to guide your journey toward better sleep.

#### Protect your sleep

To safeguard your sleep, you need to consider your habits. What you do during the day, especially during the afternoon and evening, can impact your sleep. Consider lifestyle factors like caffeine, food choices, evening tech use, and when you exercise. It's helpful to establish a consistent routine, avoiding abrupt changes. Address a restless mind by reflecting on the day before bedtime and practicing a mid-evening wind-down routine to prepare your mind and body for rest. Optimize your sleep environment - cooler, darker, and well-ventilated spaces are typically favourable, but experiment with what your body responds to best.

Sources: [Wiley Online Library](#) | Images by Unsplash