

Q. What can I do to fall asleep faster?

A. You're ready for bed... teeth brushed... pajamas on. But after you pull back the covers and get into bed, sleep doesn't come quickly. You toss and turn. You count sheep. You drink a glass of warm milk. And you try to drift off to dreamland, but it isn't happening. Sound familiar?

Do you struggle with falling asleep? If you don't get enough Zzzs (7 to 8 hours is best), you're not alone. Research shows 1 in 3 adults in the United States are short on sleep.¹ And that's a problem. Lack of sleep raises the risk for obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and mental health problems.

A few changes to your bedtime routine and lifestyle habits can help you fall asleep faster. Here are five things you can do:

- 1. Go to bed at the same time every night,** and wake up at the same time every morning...even on weekends. A regular sleep schedule helps control your body's internal clock, making it easier to fall asleep and wake up.²
- 2. Create a sleep-friendly room.** Ready for bed? Your room should be quiet, dark, relaxing, and just the right temperature.



If it's not, take a minute to make a few changes, before you get into bed.

- 3. Turn off all electronic devices before bed.** If you watch TV in bed, use a tablet, computer, phone, or play video games, you're exposed to short-wavelength blue light. Research shows exposure to this type of light before bed makes it harder to fall asleep and stay asleep. Unplug from all electronics 30 minutes to two hours before bed.³
- 4. Avoid large meals, nicotine, alcohol, and caffeine.** Why? Digesting a large meal before bed can keep you awake. Nicotine, alcohol, and caffeine act as stimulants that can

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make it hard to fall asleep. Avoid these a couple hours before bed to fall asleep faster.

- 5. Be more active, just not right before bed.** Aim for 30 minutes of exercise per day. In a recent study, researchers found that regular exercise helped improve sleep quality by 65 percent.⁴ Make time to go for a walk, ride a bike, hit the gym, or take a fitness class.

A few simple changes to your daily habits can help you get to sleep faster and sleep better. And when you get enough sleep, you have a lower risk for chronic disease. If you're still having trouble sleeping, talk to your doctor about other options to help you get your Zzzs.

References

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