

# SLEEP STRATEGIES *for* COLLEGE STUDENTS

You asked!  
We responded.  
Sleep ranked #5 out  
of 19 health topics  
that UWM students  
wanted more  
Information about.

UW Milwaukee  
Norris Health Center

Health Promotion  
& Wellness

# WHY IS SLEEP SO IMPORTANT?

*Sleep plays a vital role in:*

- ◆ Making decisions
- ◆ Mood management
- ◆ Weight management
- ◆ Supporting the immune system
- ◆ Learning, memory and problem-solving skills
- ◆ Productivity, alertness and response time
- ◆ Healing and healthy growth and development
- ◆ Feeling rested and energetic

## TIPS TO CONSIDER:

### **Keep a regular sleep schedule.**

Go to bed and get up around consistent times, even on weekends, to regulate your internal clock.

### **Develop a bedtime routine.**

Do relaxing activities before bed to give your body cues it's time to wind down. Some ideas are to read for pleasure, do a relaxation exercise, notice your breathing, take a warm shower, listen to relaxing music, or acknowledge your gratitude for someone/something.

### **Aim for 8-10 hours each night.**

Whether a morning person or a night owl, teens and young adults need at least 8 hours of sleep for optimal daytime functioning at school, work or at the gym/on the field.

### **Take caution with napping.**

If you need to take one to get through the day, make sure it is at least 6 hours before bedtime and no more than 30 minutes long. However, individuals who struggle with insomnia are generally advised to avoid taking daytime naps, because even a short nap may make it more difficult to fall asleep at night.

### **Avoid or minimize alcohol and marijuana use.**

While alcohol can cause relaxation and sleepiness, it also disrupts the sleep cycle, which can cause a person to feel unrested, irritable, not as sharp and have a difficult time concentrating. Studies also suggest marijuana may interfere with a healthy sleep cycle.

### **Avoid caffeine and nicotine 4-6 hours before bed.**

Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants that can interfere with falling asleep. Be aware of the following products: coffee, black or green tea, caffeinated sodas, chocolate, some prescription and over-the-counter medications, and all forms of tobacco, including JUUL/e-cigarettes.

### **Have a light snack before bed.**

Warm milk and foods with the amino acid tryptophan (e.g., turkey, fish, nuts, eggs, cheese) can help cause drowsiness. Avoid heavy, late night meals.

### **Only use your bed for sleeping.**

Avoid using your bed to watch TV, study, or read, so that your body associates being in bed with sleeping. Sex is the only exception.

**Turn off electronic devices at least 1 hour before bed.**

The stimulation and blue-wave light from electronic devices (e.g., video games, computers, cell phones, TV's) can make it harder to fall asleep. If you cannot avoid using electronic devices shortly before bed, consider downloading a "blue light filter" app or get blue light glasses. Additionally, use the 'night shift' feature on phones and turn on "Do not disturb."

**Maintain a cool, quiet and comfortable sleep environment.**

Sleep on a comfortable mattress in a cool, dark, quiet room. Earplugs or a fan help to minimize noise. Creating a dark room with black-out shades or a sleep mask helps your body produce melatonin, a hormone that signals to the body it's time to rest.

**Something on your mind keeping you awake? Write it down.**

Anxious thoughts and worries make it difficult to fall asleep. Get them out of your head by writing them down or making a to-do list. You can review and deal with them in the morning.

**Exercise 20-30 minutes every day.**

Regular exercise promotes better sleep. Put several hours between exercise and bedtime.



**QUALITY**



**QUANTITY**



**CONSISTENCY**

*Quality, quantity, and consistency are key ingredients for good sleep.  
Consider these tips to allow sleep to do its job for you.*

# REACH OUT FOR HELP

*Consider talking to a health professional if you:*

- ◆ Have been frequently using a sleep aid (e.g., sleeping pills) with little relief
- ◆ Notice sleep difficulties affecting important areas of your life
- ◆ Snore heavily or breathe irregularly during the night
- ◆ Have trouble with ongoing sleep problems from issues such as physical pain, depression, persistent anxiety, reactions to medication, or withdrawal from alcohol/drugs

## SLEEP RESOURCES

**UWM Norris Health Center (414-229-4716) and University Counseling (414-229-4133)**

<http://uwm.edu/norris/>

**Aurora Sleep Medicine Centers**

<https://www.aurorahealthcare.org/services/sleep-disorders#Overview>

**Froedtert & Medical College of Wisconsin Sleep Disorders Program**

<http://www.froedtert.com/sleep-disorders>

**National Institute of Health**

<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Understanding-Sleep> and

<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/sleep/conditioninfo/Pages/default.aspx>

**National Sleep Foundation**

<https://sleepfoundation.org/>

**American Sleep Association**

<https://www.sleepassociation.org/>

**To create your own sleep goals please visit**

<https://www.uwm.edu/norris/youatuwm>