How to Sleep Like a Pro

Sleep deprivation can lead to many health problems such as diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, cancer, anxiety, and more. To feel your best, it's vital to get proper sleep.

Make Sleep a Priority

Before mentioning any other suggestions, it's important to note that if you don't allow enough time for sleep, nothing is going to change! The amount of sleep that is required varies from person to person, but research shows that on average we need anywhere from seven to nine hours per night.

To begin, start with allowing eight hours for sleep. However, if you'd like to be a bit more specific about how much you need, you can try the following experiment:

How Much Sleep Do I Need?

1. Track your sleep duration – you'll do this for every day of the experiment
2. Test your reflexes – go to humanbenchmark.com and test your reflexes for the first three days
3. Add 30 to 60 minutes of sleep for 30 days. You can do this by going to bed earlier (recommended if you tend to be a "night owl") or waking up later
4. Test your reflexes (again) – go to humanbenchmark.com and test your reflexes after 30 days of longer sleep duration and see how they've changed. If they've improved, you're on the right track!
5. See how you feel – do you feel better now that you're getting more sleep? Probably! Track your symptoms as you go through the experiment to determine how much better you feel with extra sleep.

As you do this experiment, you'll want to pay extra-close attention to the following factors that improve sleep quality:

Control Your Exposure to Light

Light is the primary determinant of our circadian rhythm and sleep/wake cycle, and thus controlling our exposure to light is a powerful way to regulate sleep. The first step is to reduce your exposure to light at night by:

- Avoiding or minimizing the use of computers, TVs, tablets, and phones three hours before bedtime. Use programs like **F.lux** to reduce the blue light emitted from these devices.
- Dimming, covering, or removing anything that emits light in your bedroom like alarm clocks
- Using **blackout shades** and/or an **eyemask** to make your bedroom as dark as possible
- Wearing **orange glasses** to reduce exposure to blue light (**try these** if you need to fit them over eyeglasses)

Once you've reduced your exposure to light at night, you'll also want to focus on getting exposure to sunlight during the day. You can do this by:

- Taking a short walk when you wake up in the morning
- Eating breakfast outside in the sun
- Using a **[light machine](#)**

Move Your Body
It's important to get adequate amounts of physical exercise for proper sleep. Make sure to pay special attention not only to exercise, but also the time that is usually spent being sedentary. Try a standing or treadmill desk, take the stairs, and walk more!

Optimize Your Sleep Nutrition
Some people do well eating a smaller dinner (especially those with digestive issues). Others do better with a bedtime snack, such as those who tend toward low blood sugar. In general, though, it's best to go to bed neither overly full nor hungry. You should also make sure your diet isn't too low carb or low fat, as these types of diets can also lead to trouble sleeping.

Cut Caffeine and Alcohol
These two items can have a profound effect on sleep, so they're best left out if you're having sleep problems. Remember that if you are currently drinking a lot of coffee, it's best to wean yourself off rather than cutting it out cold turkey.

Manage Your Stress
It's incredibly important to manage your stress effectively when trying for good sleep. Many of us tend to run around all day like chickens with their heads cut off and then wonder why we have trouble sleeping. Make sure to calm your system by implementing stress management techniques like deep breathing, meditation, yoga, tai chi, and more for good sleep.

Create a Relaxing Sleep Environment
Creating a bedroom that makes you relaxed and ready for bedtime is very helpful when it comes to getting quality sleep. You can do this by:

- Only using your bedroom for sleep and sex – avoid using electronics in the bedroom
- Controlling the temperature of the room – most people sleep best in a slightly cool room
- Getting a comfortable bed – your sleep isn't going to be great if you find your bed uncomfortable!
- Reducing the noise level – if there's a lot of noise outside your bedroom, use earplugs or a **[noise machine](#)** to block it out