



EFR EMPLOYEE & FAMILY RESOURCES

PRIORITIZE SLEEP



NATIONAL SLEEP AWARENESS WEEK IS MARCH 3-10. WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO GET ENOUGH QUALITY SLEEP?

Discover why sleep is important for your health, as well as quick and attainable tips for getting a restful night's sleep!

Sleep: We all need it to survive. However, we often don't prioritize the quality of the sleep we're getting, or even if we're getting enough in the first place.

Along with a good diet and exercise, good sleep is one of the pillars of optimal health. Sleep helps us:

- Concentrate and focus
- Make and recall memories
- Combat depression
- Build up immunity
- Lower blood pressure
- Reduce the risk for chronic diseases

RESTFUL APPS

Check out these [mobile apps](#) that can help you get to sleep and have a restful night!

- Regulate appetite and cravings
- Reduce the likelihood of obesity

If sleep is actually something that helps keep us healthy, why do so few of us get the recommended 7-8 hours of sleep? Here are **some tips for getting a better night's sleep:**

1. Increase daytime bright light exposure.

Natural sunlight or bright light during the day helps keep your circadian rhythm, the natural on-and off-switch for your body, healthy and regulated. This increases your energy and quality of nightly sleep.

2. Limit evening screen time.

Blue light, which emanates from electronic devices, reduces your relaxation hormones by confusing

your circadian rhythm. Try turning off all screens about two hours before bedtime to get quality rest.

3. Think twice about caffeine.

Drinking coffee late in the day can slow or stop your body from relaxing at night. Caffeine can stay elevated in your blood for 6-8 hours, so be sure to stick with decaffeinated drinks after 3-4 p.m.

4. Reconsider that nap.

While short power naps (30 minutes or less) can be helpful, long or irregular naps can negatively affect your health and sleep quality, as daytime napping can confuse your internal clock.



5. Strive to be consistent.

We're all born with a set circadian rhythm, which aligns with waking at sunrise and sleeping at sunset. The more you move away from this "loop," the more tired you can feel when you decide to stay up late on the weekends.

5. Limit alcohol consumption.

Alcohol can negatively affect your circadian rhythm, as it alters natural relaxation hormones, such as melatonin. It can also increase symptoms of sleep apnea, snoring, and disrupted sleep patterns.

6. Limit late-night snacking.

Late-night eating may negatively affect both sleep quality and the release of relaxation hormones. The larger the food intake (more of a meal than a snack), the more disruption.

7. Wind down and relax.

Do you have a pre-sleep routine that helps you relax? Try listening to calming music, taking a warm shower, meditating, or reading a book.

8. Set the temperature.

According to Healthline, studies show increased body and bedroom temperature can decrease sleep quality and increase wakefulness. Choose a comfortable temperature that helps you get a better night's rest.

Sometimes life keeps you from getting a good night's sleep for different reasons. If you're struggling with something, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can help. Your EAP provides:

- In-person counseling
- Legal & financial consultation
- Identity theft restoration tools

- Child- and eldercare resources
- Life coaching

You have confidential, 24/7 access to our masters-level counselors who will help you manage life's challenges. For assistance, call **800-327-4692**.



WELLNESS

The "4-7-8" Breath



Looking for a way to help wind down at the end of your day? Consider focusing on your breath as you begin resting. Similar to the concept of counting sheep, focusing on the breath can begin to calm the mind and bring attention to one area when your mind wants to be in several.

Whether you're saying "inhale" and "exhale" as your body does just that, or assigning numbers to the breath, being mindful of how relaxed you are (or aren't) can begin to further quiet the mind.

One common breathing technique that is supposed to be especially helpful to soothe the body into a state of rest is the **4-7-8 breath**. It works like this:

- Inhale through nose to a count of 4
- Hold breath to a count of 7
- Exhale through mouth to a count of 8

Try two to four cycles of the 4-7-8 breath and see if it makes a difference when you tuck yourself in at night!



EFR EMPLOYEE & FAMILY RESOURCES

For related articles and support, visit our website at www.efr.org/myeap. To access EAP services, call 800.327.4692.

This newsletter is provided by your employer in cooperation with your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) because we care about you and your family.



WWW.EFR.ORG