



## **Beyond Counting Sheep: 10 Tips to Improve Sleep**

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1. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. This helps to regulate your natural sleep-wake cycle. When you stay up late and sleep in on weekends, your body likely has trouble adjusting back to normal hours for the work/school week. Napping should only be done in the early afternoon for no more than 30 minutes. If you sleep too much during the day, you will not be tired when it's time to go to bed.
2. If you are really groggy when you wake up, try scheduling your sleep as a multiple of 90 minutes (7.5 hours or 9 hours), making it less likely that you will wake up during the deep sleep part of your sleep cycle.
3. Spend more time outside in natural sunlight, especially in the morning, and reduce artificial light at night. Turn off or remove those stimulating screens (TV, computer, iPad) especially before bedtime.
4. Make your bedroom a place for sleep that is comfortable and relaxing. It is best if your room is cool (65 degrees), dark, and quiet when you are ready to sleep.
5. Train your brain what bed is for by creating a relaxing bedtime routine that may include reading, journaling, a warm bath, or soft music. Try not to do any stimulating activities before bedtime or in bed during the day.
6. Avoid arguments or big decisions before bed. Try to plan for the next day earlier in the evening and postpone worrying until the next day. A notepad next to your bed might help with reminders for the next day rather than keeping you up at night.
7. Avoid heavy, rich, spicy, or acid meals before bedtime as well as alcohol and nicotine. Alcohol may help you fall asleep but usually keeps you in a light sleep which makes it more likely that you will wake up during the night. Nicotine is a stimulant that your body will likely crave again during the night.
8. Reduce caffeine intake during the day. Caffeine can impact you even 10-12 hours after consumed, so it is best to not drink caffeine after lunch time.
9. Exercise regularly. An optimal amount would be 30 minutes a day about 4-5 hours before bedtime. Less stimulating exercises such as yoga or stretches can be done closer to bedtime.

10. It's normal to wake up during the night; the trick is to continue to cue your body for sleep by not looking at the clock and remaining in bed in a relaxed position. You might have to tell yourself that relaxation is the goal rather than sleep and focus on body sensations rather than thoughts.