

Let's talk about sleep. Sleep is essential for our physical health and mental and emotional well-being: We need it to refresh the mind and heal the body. We love it, we crave it, and when we're not getting it, we're miserable. So today we're going to investigate what's called sleep hygiene to keep your sleep more consistent.

You've probably heard that to function optimally, adults should get seven to nine hours of sleep every night. And, maybe, you've laughed at that and said to yourself, "Whoever declared that doesn't have any idea what it's like to be balancing everything I've got going on!"

I really hear you on this one. But when I wake up in the morning after eight hours of solid sleep, I am a radically different human being. I can feel the difference in my body, in my mind, and in my mood.

Getting the sleep you need is a combination of getting enough hours and preparing yourself for sleep, so that you go to sleep quickly and sleep soundly. To help you get the most out of any amount of hours in bed, here are some tips from the [Sleep Foundation](#) and the [Mayo Clinic](#). But my suggestion is to just start with one! Commit to a single change for one week and see what subtle shifts you notice.

- **Have your last bite at least two hours before bed.** Be aware that it's difficult to sleep with a full stomach, and you may wake up in the middle of the night needing to use the bathroom. Instead, consider dinner the last meal of the day, with no after-dinner snacks. That will help you give your body two full hours of digestion before you hit the pillow. Also, try to limit caffeine after 4 p.m.
- **Turn off all screens at least 30 minutes before bed.** The specific wavelengths of light that screens emit — phones, TVs, and tablets — block melatonin, one of the key hormones involved in sleep. Melatonin is at low levels during the day and begins being released a few hours before bedtime as part of the natural circadian rhythm of our systems. We can't fall asleep without that natural rise in melatonin at night. So, if you're blocking melatonin by staring at screens right before bed, you're going to have a tough time falling asleep.
- **If you have to nap during the day, limit naps to 20 minutes.** Better yet, take up meditation instead! It's a more efficient way to rest and recharge and won't leave you sluggish. Try starting with a five- or 10-minute guided meditation during any afternoon slump when you feel drowsy. Look for one that's good for focus or energy.
- **Keep the use of the bed traditional.** Try not to work from bed, watch television in bed (very stimulating), and when it's time for sleep have no screens visible (put phones face down).
- **Choose just one thing you're going to do before bed.** If you're like me, you get excited about me-time in the evening and tend to think you can do 10 things in an hour and a half. But that's just not possible. Instead, you end up pushing bedtime later and later. So, choose just one thing on your personal to-do list to help make sure you don't stay up too late.
- **Follow a wind-down routine.** Try creating a bedtime ritual that helps you unwind and prepare for mental rest. For example: shower, brush and floss teeth, meditate, sleep. Or stretch, bath, read, sleep. When you repeat the same routine nightly, you're sending a cue to the mind and body that it's time to transition from awake time to sleep time, making it much easier to fall asleep.

Pick just one of those seven ideas and try it next week. You may be surprised by how much a small change in your routine can make a big difference in your energy levels.

Beyond sleep hygiene, research suggests that various types of meditation can help improve insomnia and may even improve sleep quality for those [without existing sleep problems](#). Mindfulness and meditation help bring about a relaxed state of mind that is conducive to [falling asleep](#). This reaction is often described as the [relaxation response](#), or the opposite of the stress response, and has [physical, mental, and emotional benefits](#).

If you are using your phone or another device to listen to a guided meditation session before bed, you can reduce distractions by turning off notifications, turning down the brightness on your screen, and setting the volume to an appropriate level.

With quite a bit of overlap between different techniques, here are common meditation methods for sleep:

- **Mindfulness Meditation:** Most of the research on meditation for insomnia has been done on mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness involves focusing on the present and welcoming thoughts and emotions in an open-minded, nonjudgmental manner.
- **Guided Imagery and Music:** Guided meditation for insomnia promotes relaxation by asking you to imagine yourself in a calming place, such as a white sandy beach or a forest. The soundscapes and soothing guidance of Core instructors can provide this for you.
- **Body Scan Meditation:** In body scan meditation, you are instructed to focus on different parts of the body and note any sensations of pain or tension. This is closely tied to progressive muscle relaxation, in which you actively tense and then relax each successive muscle.
- **Deep Breathing:** Deep breathing while engaging the diaphragm is often used in combination with other meditation techniques to enhance relaxation. Two examples of this are the whiskey breath and the molasses breath techniques, as guided by Core.

At Core by Hyperice, our goal is to improve and support your mental health, because we know that wherever you go and whatever you're doing, you take your head with you. So when we invest in the time to tend our mental wellness, everything else comes more easily — sleep included.