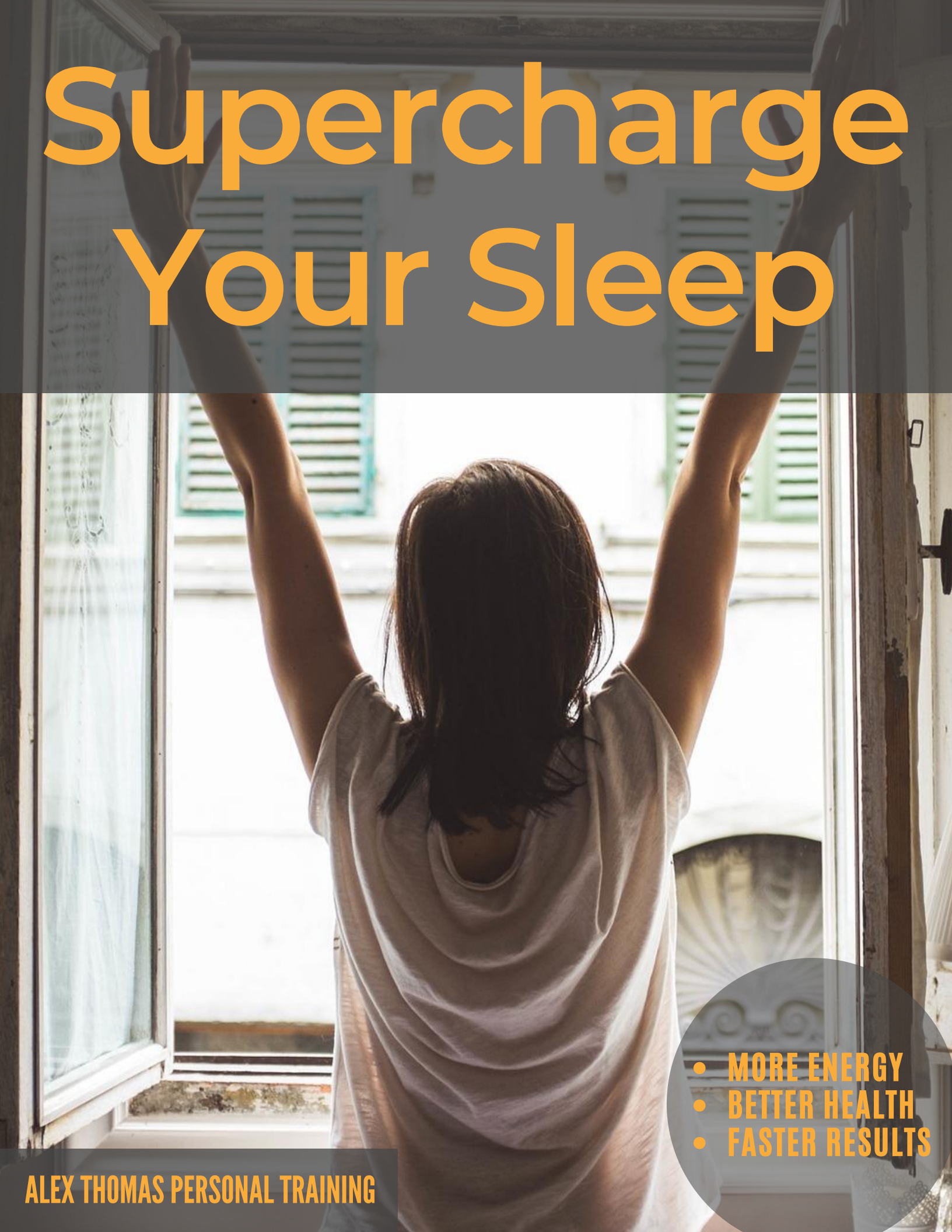
Supercharge Your Sleep



- MORE ENERGY
- BETTER HEALTH
- FASTER RESULTS

ALEX THOMAS PERSONAL TRAINING

SUPERCHARGE YOUR SLEEP

CONTENTS



3
Why Your Sleep Matters
Here's why sleep has been called the newest status symbol.

4
How Much Sleep Do You Need?
Learn about the phases of sleep and how they help your body recover and reenergize.

6
Sleep and Your Health
A quick overview of how not getting enough shuteye puts your body at risk.

7
How Your Sleeping Position Affects You
Do you sleep on your back? Your side? Here's what you need to know.

8
17 Tips to Supercharge Your Sleep
Boost your quality sleep time with these easy lifestyle tips.

12
Your Body on Sleep: AMAZING!
Check out these benefits of a well-rested body.

13
Rediscover Your Energy!
Learn how we can help you feel ready to take on the world!



WHY YOUR SLEEP MATTERS

Sleep has been called the new “status symbol” for good reason – it’s critically important to your health.

And for some of us, sleep is in short supply.

Whether by choice or chance, many of us don’t get nearly enough shuteye, and we try to push through during the day despite feeling exhausted.

As many as 35 percent of us use smartwatches and smartphones to track our sleep habits (according to a study by Verizon).

Although sometimes feeling tired is a fact of life, if it's a regular occurrence it can wreak havoc on your body.

All sorts of things can lead to sleepless nights: stress, work demands, and life events like having a baby.

Sometimes underlying health issues can also make it hard to get enough quality sleep.

The problem is, not getting enough sleep can affect your mood, your weight, your workouts and even your health down to the cellular level!

The quality of your sleep also can have a powerful impact on your hormones and blood pressure... and the way you sleep can even affect how your body moves and feels..

This guide will outline why it’s important to make sleep a priority, how to get more of it, and show you ways to optimize your sleeping time for improved health, energy, focus, and performance.

It's amazing how great you feel when your body is well-rested and energized for a new day!

HOW MUCH SLEEP DO YOU *REALLY* NEED?

The need for sleep varies from person to person – based on activity level, genetics, and lifestyle – but there are some general guidelines about how much shuteye we need based on our age.

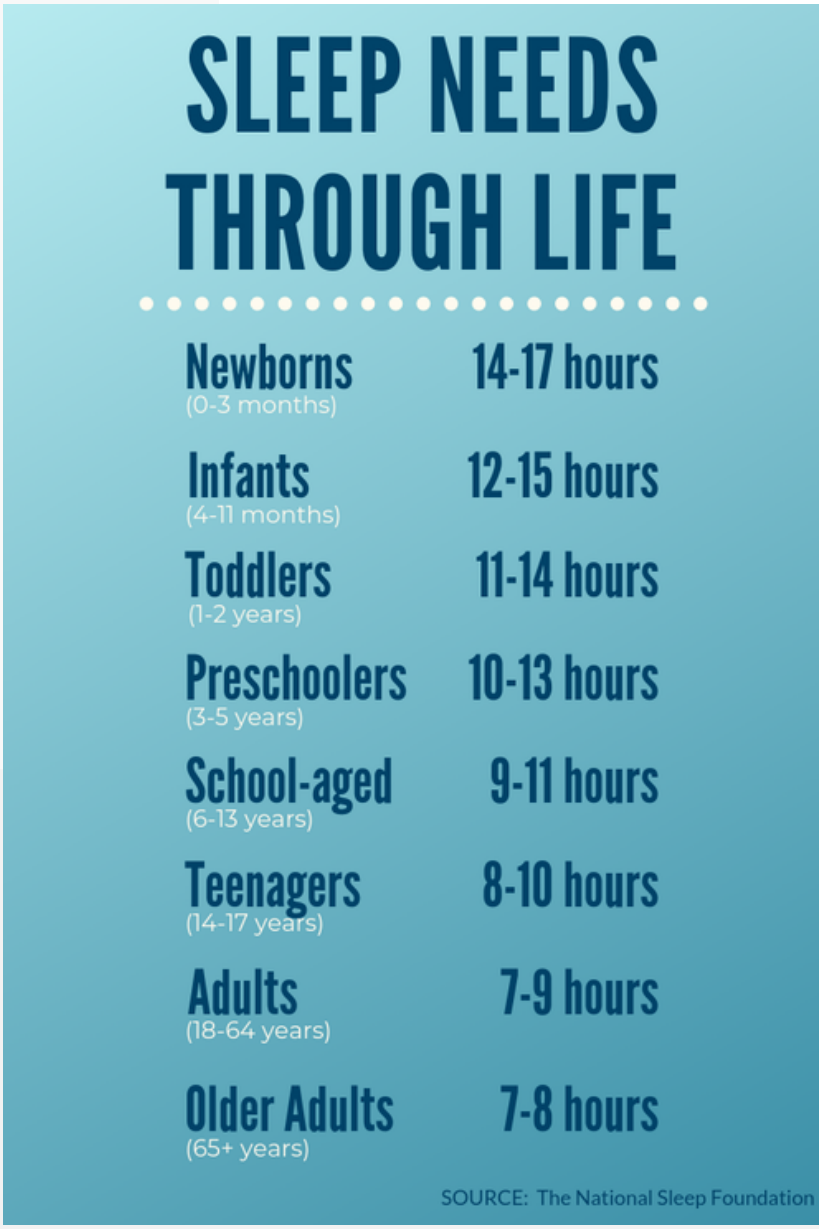
Studies show people who regularly sleep more than 7 hours a night are generally healthier and live longer.

On the flip side, sleeping LESS than 7 hours a night is associated with a host of problems from impaired immune function and heart disease to depression and obesity.

The most important indicator of your sleep is how you feel: if you're tired or drowsy, you likely need more sleep in your life!

Disrupted sleep also can impact how you feel. Your body cycles through 4 phases of sleep each night, each of which plays an important role in how your body functions.

While it might seem that "sleeping away" a third of your time each day is unproductive, it actually helps make the remaining two-thirds of your day even more productive.



THE STAGES OF SLEEP

Sleep is now categorized into two basic types: non-REM (rapid eye movement) and REM. Your body cycles through these phases about every 90 minutes, with an estimated 75 percent of its time each night in non-REM sleep and 25 percent in REM.

N1 (formerly called stage 1):

This is the bridge between being awake and sleeping. This stage lasts only a few minutes and during it, your breathing and heart rate slow and your muscles relax.

THE PHASES OF SLEEP

N2 (formerly stage 2):

In this stage, you relax even more and your body temperature drops. This is one reason it's important to sleep in a cool room whenever possible, so your body can easily lower its temp as it enters sleep cycles.

N3 (formerly stages 3 & 4):

This is deep sleep, when your body goes into recovery mode. This is the hardest phase to wake up from. If you've ever awakened from a midday nap and felt confused about what day or time it was, it was because you had slipped into deep sleep.

During this phase, your heart rate and breathing slow to their lowest levels, and your brain waves also slow down.

This is the stage of sleep where your body repairs and restores your muscles and tissues, boosts immune function, releases growth hormone, and re-energizes itself for the coming day.

REM (formerly stage 5):

Your body enters its first REM cycle about 90 minutes after you fall asleep.

On a regular night, most of us have 5 or 6 REM cycles, with each REM cycle lasting longer as the night goes on.

This is when most dreaming happens — which is why we often wake up in the middle of a dream when the alarm clock goes off in the morning.

During REM, your brain becomes more active while your muscles relax even further. Your eyes move rapidly, your heart rate goes up, your blood pressure rises, and your breathing speeds up.

If you think of N3 (deep sleep) as your body's recovery time, REM sleep is when your brain recovers, because it's when it processes information gathered during your day.

As you can imagine, this activity makes REM sleep hugely important for learning and memory.





SLEEP AND YOUR HEALTH

People who don't get enough sleep are at higher risk for heart disease, diabetes, weight gain and obesity, depression and anxiety, and even certain kinds of cancer.

Researchers are still investigating the links between sleep and disease.

For instance, people who have sleep apnea – which causes them to wake up many times at night because of breathing problems – are especially at-risk for heart problems.

Scientists believe that without getting enough deep sleep, the body never fully lowers its heart rate or blood pressure, which can can lead to higher blood pressure during the day and a greater chance of cardiovascular problems... even in younger people.

In fact, one study showed that teens who didn't sleep well had higher cholesterol and blood pressure levels as well as a higher body mass index.

Sleep and Your Weight

Sleep and obesity have a complicated relationship.

When you don't get enough sleep, it can disrupt the release of hormones like ghrelin (which makes you hungry) and leptin (which tells you you're full).

Have you ever noticed when you're tired, you feel hungrier and eat more?

That's your hormones at work. Brain imaging studies hint that when you don't get enough sleep, your brain responds differently to unhealthy foods, which makes you more likely to eat them.

Plus, not sleeping enough lowers causes some other metabolic issues, including how your body regulates blood sugar levels.

One study found that after 6 nights of sleeping only 4 hours, subjects lost 40 percent of their ability to break down glucose – a key factor in weight gain and developing diabetes.

HOW YOUR SLEEPING POSITION AFFECTS YOU

Did you know that some sleeping positions can give you backaches, headaches, premature wrinkles, and even impact your squats? It's true!

If you decide to try to change your sleeping position, be patient. The best bet, according to experts, is start out each night in your desired sleeping position and over time it will seem more more natural.

Here's a roundup of basic sleeping positions from the National Sleep Foundation:

Fetal position

- Most popular position, at 41 percent.
- Good position for people who snore as it keeps airways open.
- Studies hint this position helps your brain do a better job of clearing waste that can lead to neurological diseases (Parkinson's and Alzheimer's).
- Curling up too tightly can restrict your breathing and leave you feeling stiff and sore.
- Try to extend your body and place a pillow between your knees.

On your back

- 8 percent sleep on their backs.
- Best for preventing aches and pains as body rests in a neutral position.
- Unless your head is elevated and supported by pillows, you can experience snoring, sleep apnea, and acid reflux.



On your side

- Top choice of 15 percent.
- Can decrease acid reflux and stop back and neck pain.
- Helps prevent snoring and sleep apnea.
- If you're a side sleeper and your knees cave in while doing squats, you might have tight muscles because of how your legs are positioned all night, according to the NASM.
- Try sleeping with a pillow between your knees.
- Sleeping with your face smushed into a pillow all night can cause wrinkles.

On your stomach

- Go-to pick for 7 percent of us.
- It's good for stopping snoring.
- It's bad for just about everything else.
- Puts excess pressure on your muscles and joints.
- Sleeping with your head sideways can make it hard to keep your airway open plus cause neck pain.
- Try sleeping with a pillow under your forehead so your breathing is unobstructed.

17 TIPS TO SUPERCHARGE YOUR SLEEP

01 STAY AWAY FROM CAFFEINE, ALCOHOL, AND OTHER DRUGS

Caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine can drastically affect the quality of your sleep. (Not to mention they can also increase anxiety and stress.)

Try to avoid anything containing caffeine for at least 4-6 hours before bed. Caffeine is found in coffee, tea, soda, chocolate, some pain relievers, and even drinks like kombucha. Check your labels to be sure.

While at first alcohol might make you feel tired, a few hours later you could experience a rebound effect, leaving you tossing and turning at night. Try not to drink for at least 4 hours before you go to bed.

You know all about the health hazards of smoking, but did you know that nicotine is a stimulant? It can rev you up, making it hard to go to sleep.

02 AVOID EATING BEFORE BED

Try to finish your last meal of the day several hours before bedtime, and steer clear of foods that cause you indigestion.

If you get hungry at night, snack on lighter foods that you know won't disturb your sleep. Since we all have different digestive triggers, this list of foods will be individual to you.

03 DRINK (WATER) IN MODERATION

Try not to down a huge glass of water shortly before bed, because chances are you'll have to get up at least once in the night to go to the bathroom.

04 WORK OUT EARLIER IN THE DAY

While regular exercise will help you sleep better, working out too close to bedtime can make it harder to fall asleep. That's because your body secretes the stress hormone cortisol to help power you through your workout.

Whenever possible, try to finish up your workout at least three hours before bed.

05 SET A REGULAR BEDTIME

This helps set your body's internal clock to have normal waking/sleeping times.

Do your best to stick with this bedtime every night (even weekends). This will keep you on track during the week and avoid that overtired Monday morning feeling!



06 CREATE A NIGHTTIME ROUTINE

Our bodies love to get on a schedule. Creating a routine that you follow every night will help set up cues that it's time to go to bed, signaling your body that it's time to wind down.

Read, take a relaxing warm (not too hot or cold) shower or bath, meditate / pray, and enjoy relaxing time with your family – and avoid anything that makes you stressed!

07 AVOID SCREEN TIME

Screens (phone, TV, tablet, computer) emit blue light, which can delay the release of melatonin, your body's sleep-inducing hormone. Try not to spend much time with your eyes focused on them before bedtime.

If screen time is a must, you can download a blue-light-blocking app or use glasses that block blue light.

08 WAIT UNTIL YOU'RE TIRED

Forcing yourself to sleep before you feel physically tired can lead to frustration and stress, which makes it even harder to fall asleep.

If you're still feeling wide awake after being in bed for 20 minutes, get up and do something restful (like read) until you're sleepy.



09 SET THE STAGE

Make sure your bedroom is inviting: it should be cool (between 60 and 67 degrees), dark, and quiet.

Some people find that white noise – either a fan, sound machine, or phone app – helps them sleep.

Eliminate anything that could be stressful or wake you up. If your pet keeps you up at night, consider having them sleep in another room.

It also can help to clear your bedroom of clutter.

Is your mattress comfortable? They need replacing every 10 years or so. How about your pillow(s) and blankets? Is it time to upgrade?

10 DIM THE LIGHTS

A few hours before bed, turn down the lights to avoid stimulating your body's "awake" response.

11 JOURNAL

Some people find that writing about the day's wins and worries helps them destress, while others keep a journal of the things for which they are grateful.

Others find that writing a list of to-do's for the next day helps them relax. Experiment!

12 BYE BYE, CLOCK!

Place your bedside clock where you can't see it.

This is for two reasons: the light it emits can keep you awake and if you are having a hard time sleeping, seeing it tick away the time also can make you feel stressed.

13 SOAK UP THE SUN

Natural sunlight during the day is a must whenever possible, to help reinforce your body's circadian rhythms.

Try to get some sunlight as early in the morning as you can, and if you work during the day try to sneak out at lunchtime to soak in some rays.

14 SAY NO TO LATE NAPS

Midday power naps (avoiding the deep sleep phase!) can be a great way to recharge.

But if you enjoy naps, make sure you take it earlier in the afternoon vs. later.

Napping too late in the day can reduce your body's drive for sleep and make it more challenging to fall asleep when bedtime rolls around.

15 SLEEP-BOOSTING SUPPLEMENTS

Calming herbal teas containing chamomile can help you wind down before bed – just make sure they aren't too hot, as your body likes to be cool when it sleeps.

If you absolutely can't get to sleep on a regular basis, ask your doc or pharmacist about taking supplements such as magnesium or melatonin, which help some people get to sleep.

16 KEEP AT IT

If your body's sleep cycles have been off for a while, it might take a while to see major improvements.

Try to be patient – stress is the enemy of sleep!

17 ASK YOUR DOC

If you still are having problems falling asleep or staying asleep – or you feel tired during the day even though you thought you slept – it's worth checking with your doctor.

Sometimes health conditions such as restless leg syndrome or sleep apnea can interfere with sleep. And if you've ever had a job with shift work, you could have a circadian rhythm dysfunction.





YOUR BODY ON SLEEP: AMAZING!

Getting 7-8 hours of quality sleep every night makes a HUGE difference in how you move, feel, and live!

CHECK OUT THESE BENEFITS:

- You wake up feeling energised, with fewer aches and pains.
- Your immune system gets a boost, helping you fight off colds and illness.
- You have lower risk of developing serious conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.
- Your skin will have fewer breakouts. Researchers believe this has to do with the regulation of hormones in your body.
- Your eyes are clearer and your overall skin condition improves, looking smoother and less wrinkled, because your body has adequate repair and recovery time.
- You have fewer cravings. When you are well-rested, your body has better control over your hunger hormones (leptin and ghrelin).
- Your focus and memory improve, boosting your performance and reducing your risk of getting injured.
- You're happier! Research shows that when you get enough sleep, your mood improves and stress levels drop.



REDISCOVER YOUR ENERGY

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