10 Ways to a Healthy Sleep

**SLEEP CAN BE** a barometer of good health: We tend to get more of it when we’re feeling balanced, healthy and at ease but less when we’re feeling stressed, depressed or in pain. Over time, not getting enough sleep can have negative effects on your immune system and life expectancy. It can put you at risk for things like obesity and heart disease. Want to sleep better naturally? Try “sleep hygiene”—best practices to ensure a good night’s sleep. Here are 10 tips to try:

1. **BE CONSISTENT.** Stick with a regular wake-sleep schedule, even on weekends.

2. **MOVE YOUR BODY.** Researchers at Northwestern University found that regular aerobic exercise helped improve sleep quality for middle-aged and older adults struggling with insomnia. Aim to exercise in the morning or afternoon — not right before bed.

3. **LIGHTEN UP.** Get good doses of bright natural light during the day to help regulate your natural wake-sleep cycle.

4. **MIND THE NAP.** A short 15- to 30-minute nap may be a helpful reboot sometimes, but pay attention to how it affects your nightly sleep and avoid napping close to bedtime.

5. **CUT OUT LATE-IN-THE-DAY CAFFEINE.** If you love your coffee or tea, drink up in the morning/early afternoon. A study at the Henry Ford Hospital Sleep Disorders & Research Center found that caffeine consumption even six hours before bed can disrupt sleep quality and duration.

6. **SKIP THE NIGHTCAP.** Sure, it may make you feel drowsy, but researchers at the University of Melbourne found that drinking alcohol right before bed disrupts sleep patterns.

7. **STEP AWAY FROM THE SCREEN.** The blue light from screens can mess with your circadian rhythms, so limit screen time an hour or two before bed and/or use a program to limit blue light from your screens.

8. **FIND A RELAXING ROUTINE.** Create a pre-bed ritual to help you transition toward sleep. A few ideas: read, take a bath or meditate.

9. **SET THE MOOD.** Is your bedroom conducive to sleep? Think dark, cool, comfortable and quiet. Earplugs and/or a sound machine can be a good option if you’re dealing with noise or snoring.

10. **DON’T WATCH THE CLOCK.** If you’re having a hard time sleeping, tracking the time is likely to increase your anxiety. If you’re lying in bed awake and anxious, get up and do something quiet and relaxing. *