

## Slumber's Numbers: Five Steps to Better Sleep

A good night's sleep is one of the most important facets to our overall health. However, occasional and even chronic insomnia is all too common. When we don't sleep well, we don't feel well.

Here are five ways to create conditions for better sleep. Rather than counting sheep when you are up in the middle of the night, try counting down from this list, starting during the day.

- 1) Daytime exercise: Exercise is invaluable to our strength and stamina, but it helps our slumbering selves, too. Exercise brings the body's 12 systems into balance and is the healthiest known outlet for releasing excess physical and mental energy. Some people find exercise in the evening too energizing, so find a time that works for you and stick with it.
- 2) Daytime and evening food and beverage intake: Caffeine is a stimulant that can be long-felt in the body, so avoid it in the afternoon and evening if you drink it at all. Second, although alcohol might feel relaxing, it is a depressant that interrupts sleep. It reduces effective circulation and metabolism and prohibits deep sleep. Last, food that is heavy when eaten in the evening makes for troubled sleep because the body must work hard to digest it. Keep your diet, especially your dinner, light and clean so your body is set for sleep's restorative nature.
- 3) Say yes to a quiet yoga or meditation before bed. Search online for yogic exercises such as deep breathing, evening sequences, and meditation. Yoga Nidra, a guided relaxation practice, deeply relaxes the body and mind and can be practiced from the comfort of your bed. You can find Yoga Nidra apps online.
- 4) Say no to screen time several hours before bed. Screens emit a blue light that according to a recent [Harvard Medical School report](#) is hazardous to your sleep and overall health. Consider putting your phone outside your bedroom while you sleep and use an old-fashioned clock with a pleasant sound to awaken you.
- 5) Pre-bed sleep hygiene: The key concept in this step is ritual. Make one and keep to it. Do calming things. Take a bath, wear comfortable pajamas, drink herbal tea, listen to ambient music, and read positive, uplifting words.

Make your path to better sleep a successful one by taking steps throughout the day. Track your sleep progress in a sleep notebook and learn what works best for you.