



# the great eight

**Sleep.** We all need it. But few of us consistently sleep as long — or as restfully — as we should for optimum health. In fact, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that about 35 percent of adults regularly get less than seven hours of sleep. Although sleep recommendations vary somewhat, most health experts agree that a solid eight hours for adults is a good night's sleep.

Despite what you may believe, you are definitely not idle when you're sleeping! Sleep is a complex biological process that supports brain function and helps keep you healthy.



## 8 facts to know about sleep

1. You cycle through five distinct stages during the night, including a stage called rapid eye movement (REM). Some phases help you feel rested and energetic, and others help you learn new information and form memories, according to the National Institutes of Health.
2. Sleep improves your cognitive abilities, such as learning and problem-solving skills.
3. Studies show that sleep deficiency harms driving ability as much as, or more than, being drunk.
4. Sleep heals and repairs your heart and blood vessels. Not getting enough sleep regularly may increase your risk for heart disease, obesity, stroke and diabetes.
5. People who get even small amounts of regular physical activity are one-third less likely to report sleep problems and half as likely to report daytime tiredness, according to a survey by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.
6. While you sleep, your body “takes out the trash,” removing waste products and toxins from your brain. Some of these toxins are associated with Alzheimer’s disease and other neurological disorders.
7. Snoring is generally harmless, but for some people, it can be a symptom of sleep apnea, a serious problem that causes you to briefly stop breathing. Sleep apnea may lead to high blood pressure, diabetes and other health problems.
8. Some studies suggest an association between short sleep duration and weight gain, in part because of changes to hunger-related hormones. And of course, when you’re tired, you’re more likely to make less healthy food choices.



## Hungry?

The best bedtime snacks contain proteins and carbohydrates. Try:

- ½ banana and a handful of almonds
- Whole grain crackers with peanut butter
- Small bowl of whole grain cereal with milk
- ½ turkey sandwich
- Mug of herbal tea

## 8 tips to get YOUR 8

1. Stick to a routine. Go to bed and rise the same time every day — even on weekends.
2. Make your bedroom comfortable. Set the thermostat to 60 to 67 degrees. Keep your room dark and free from noise. Select a comfortable mattress and pillow.
3. Avoid alcohol and cigarettes (or any tobacco products) in the evening.
4. If you’re hungry, eat a sleep-inducing snack about an hour before bedtime (see box).
5. Stop drinking caffeine at least five to six hours before bedtime.
6. Move. Exercising during the day helps you sleep at night.
7. Avoid naps, especially later in the day. If you must take a nap, keep it to about 30 minutes.
8. Turn off electronic devices, or at least use a night-time screen. Light promotes wakefulness. Even the small amount of light from an iPhone or tablet can keep you awake.

**DO ONE THING**

Get YOUR eight. Pick at least one tip from the list above and start implementing it today. If you snore, or you regularly have trouble sleeping, talk to your doctor to rule out sleep apnea or other health issues.