

Cheat Sleep!

When you want to fall asleep, but can't:

1. Call The MIT Relaxation Line: 617-253-CALM (2256) for a relaxing recorded message
2. Download the [Bedtime Relaxation](#) mp3 from Community Wellness

How much sleep do I need?

3. Teenagers need 8-9.25 hours and adults need 7-9 hours on average per night. Individual sleep requirements to feel rested, productive, and healthy will vary. (*CDC, National Sleep Foundation*)
4. Large scale studies connect an average of 7 hours (or more) per night with protection from weight gain and obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, and stroke. Adequate sleep also protects the immune system and emotional balance (*Nurses Health Study, 2007, U. of Chicago, 2007, JAMA, 2008; Carnegie Mellon, 2009*).

Work, Friends, Sleep – pick 3

5. Sleep consolidates memories, protecting them against decay. Sleep also appears to “recover” or restore memories. This can help maximize academic performance and increase efficiency. Inadequate sleep impairs cognition and productivity. It also changes the brain to exacerbate stress, depression and anxiety.

How to take a “power nap”

6. Napping can be refreshing but can also disrupt your circadian rhythm (the body's natural sleep-wake cycle). To get the maximum benefit with the least disruption:
 - Try to time your nap about **8 hours** after you wake up.
 - Try to sleep for around **20-30 minutes**. This keeps you within the early, lighter stages of sleep.
 - Really sleep-deprived? Nap for a full sleep cycle of **90 minutes**.
 - If sleep problems persist for **more than 2 weeks**, contact a medical professional.

How to get the best quality sleep

7. Get sunlight in the early part of the day. Have breakfast by a window, sit near a window in your morning classes, and walk outside instead of taking the tunnels.

8. Practicing a relaxation technique during the day can improve sleep efficiency – you'll fall asleep more quickly once you go to bed (*Sleep 2009 conference*). Download the [Relax](#) mp3 from Community Wellness and learn to practice letting go of stress.
9. Getting the minimum recommended amount of exercise (150 minutes per week) improves sleep quality by 65% and reduces sleepiness during the day. (*Oregon State University, 2011*). Morning and afternoon exercise promotes sleep (*National Sleep Foundation, 2006; Fred Hutchison Cancer Research Center, 2003*). Evening exercise (within 2-3 hours of bed): not ideal – the body needs time to slow down and cool off to initiate sleep.
10. Keep your bedroom cool, dark and quiet. College students have been found to sleep more deeply with a “white noise” device to create a consistent sound screen that blocks out noisy hallmates. Download [free white noise](#) or get a white noise machine.
11. Sleep goes in cycles throughout the night and the body needs to go into a slower brainwave pattern in order to drift off. Stop productive activity at least 20 minutes before sleeping. The brain needs time to downshift from the faster brainwaves of wakefulness to the slower brainwaves of restful sleep.
12. Aim to go to bed and wake up at around the **same time each day**. College students with more regular hours get better quality sleep. If you have morning classes that start at different times on different days, try to get up at the same time each weekday. You can use your extra time in the morning to finish that pset.
13. If you haven't slept all night, try to clear your schedule so you can **go to bed extra early the next night** to pay down your sleep deficit without further disrupting your sleep-wake cycle.

Eating and drinking and sleep

14. Being either too hungry or too full can make it hard to get to sleep. Too many liquids within 90 minutes of bedtime can interrupt your sleep with bathroom trips.

Alcohol

15. Increases the stress hormone cortisol = bad for relaxation and deep sleep (even if it makes you sleepy, your actual sleep quality is worse). (*NIH*)

Caffeine

16. Caffeine affects the sleep cycle—even though we may not notice it, caffeine can cause lighter, more fragmented sleep. (*Carrier, Sleep Medicine, Nov. 2009*)
17. Caffeine has a half-life of 6 to 9 hours in the body. Sleep experts recommend limiting caffeine to the morning, or cutting it out if you're sensitive to it (feel jittery) or you experience sleep problems. (*Mayo Clinic*)
18. Caffeine may increase blood pressure and cortisol (cortisol=bad for relaxation and sleep). (*Mayo Clinic*)