A guide to a good night’s sleep

For information on what you can do to improve your sleep

- Sleep Environment
- Bedtime Behaviors
- Time Management
- Sleep Schedule
- Sleep Cycle
- Napping
Sleep Environment

What’s your sleep environment look like? Results of a sleep environment survey found that noise and light were significant causes of sleep disturbances in college residents.

Is your room or environment noisy when you go to sleep?
If so, consider these:
- Talk to your roommates about setting regular sleep times to ensure a quiet environment.
- Purchase a white noise machine to block out unwanted sounds.
- Ear plugs or a small fan may also be helpful.

Is there too much light in your room when you go to sleep?
If so, consider these:
- Use a sleep mask to block out unwanted light. This is a great compromise with a roommate who prefers to stay up late to study.
- Consider room darkening drapes to block outside light.
- Purchase a desk lamp for you and each roommate to avoid using the overhead lights when one of you is sleeping.

Is your environment comfortable to sleep in?
If not, consider these:
- Create a comfortable sleeping area to improve your ability to fall asleep and stay asleep. Choose the clothes, pillows and bedding that are most comfortable for you.
- Keep the bedroom at a comfortable temperature (ideally cool), and well ventilated.
- Use your bed for sleep, not studying.

Is your sleep environment clean and free of clutter?
If not, consider these:
- Make your bed daily. Research shows people who make their bed every day are 19% more likely to report a better night’s rest.
- Wash our bed sheets regularly. Research shows that sleep improves when sheets have a fresh scent.
The perfect night's sleep starts long before you get to bed! Check out these behaviors that may be sabotaging your sleep

**Bedtime Behaviors**

Using electronics too close to bedtime!
**TIP:** Turn off electronics 1 hr. before sleep

*Blue wave light* emitted from smartphones, computers, TV's, tablets and e-readers stimulate the mind and can suppress release of melatonin, our sleep-inducing hormone.

Drinking caffeinated beverages and/or smoking before bed
**TIP:** Avoid caffeine 6-8 hrs. before bed

*Both are stimulants that can make it difficult to fall asleep.*

Drinking alcoholic drinks before bed
**TIP:** Avoid alcohol at least 3 hrs. before bed.

*You may fall asleep quicker, but it robs you of deep sleep & REM which is necessary for learning.*

Exercising too close to bedtime
**TIP:** Complete exercise 2 hrs. prior to bed

*Exercise can help us sleep better, but done too close to bedtime can make it harder to fall sleep.*

Eating a big meal just before bedtime
**TIP:** Avoid large meals 2-3 hrs. before bed.

*Laying down after a big meal can cause acid in the stomach to leak out into the esophagus or “food pipe” causing heartburn and reflux while you sleep.*

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*Source: National Sleep Foundation.
Michael A. Gratch, PH.D., RDMS*
Time Management

How are your time management skills? A survey of college students found that time management was one of the major factors in why students were sacrificing sleep.

Do you find yourself struggling to complete projects on time or are doing them at the last minute?
If so, consider these:

- Get and use a calendar. Write everything down, including sleep!
- Schedule time to relax.
- Plan ahead – if you have a large research paper due, work backward on your calendar to figure out how much time you will need to research and write it.
- Establish priorities. Make a prioritized list. Some tasks can wait, some tossed. Schedule highest priority tasks to when you work best. Morning person or night owl?
- Study difficult topics first – when your mind is alert and fresh.
- Use daylight hours productively. Research shows each hour used for study during the day is equal to one and one half hours used at night.
- Build in flexibility/plan for the unexpected. This will help manage unforeseen obstacles.

Do you find you are frequently late to class, practice, meetings?
If so consider these:

- Being late isn’t an excuse, it’s a choice. You chose to be late. It causes stress. Plan ahead.
- Make a plan to arrive 10 minutes early, not “on time”. Strive to be early.
- Check your clock frequently.
- Avoid back-to-back obligations.
- Allow for extra time for travel for unseen delays.
- Learn to say NO. Don’t overbook with too many activities/social events.
- Avoid the “doing one more thing” before you need to leave.
- Look at the costs of being late and the payoff for being on time. (stress versus relaxed)
Sleep Schedule

Individuals who get high quality sleep often have a regular sleep routine and ritual. Utilize the checklist below to develop your own.

Sleep Routine Checklist

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<th>Go to bed (and wake up) at the same time-weekends included!</th>
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<td>Sleeping in on weekends resets your sleep cycle, making Monday mornings particularly tough.</td>
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Create a relaxing bedtime routine
Just as you cool down after a workout, your mind needs a cool down before you go to bed. Regularly taking the time to unwind each night will signal your brain that it is time to sleep. The following are a few suggested relaxing bedtime routines:

- Sip on chamomile tea
  Not only can sipping a warm drink before bed make you feel drowsier, the naturally caffeine-free tea has a calming effect on the body.

- Listen to soothing music
  Studies show that listening to classical music prior to sleep can improve the quality of your sleep.

- Do yoga
  Gentle stretching of the muscles helps to release built up tension and induce a feeling of relaxation.

- De-stress and decompress with journaling
  Journaling can help you lay out your thoughts, help calm a racing mind, and allow you to write down, and temporarily forget about everything that's bugging you before bed.

- Take a warm shower
  Stepping out of a warm shower and into a cooler bedroom will cause a slight decrease in body temperature, which triggers a tranquil, drowsy feeling.

Re-evaluate your class schedule
Choose class times that match times you are most alert.

Review your work/social schedule
You can not be your best if you are tired all the time. Review your current work and social schedule and see if adjustments can be made. Make sleep a priority!

Chill-out
Designate a special place and time every evening for a few minutes of meditation. Try a relaxation technique like guided imagery or progressive muscle relaxation.

Busy your brain with mental exercise
Being able to distract yourself from your worries can be enough to help you fall asleep. Try Sudoku, word search or crossword puzzles—but in paper format!

For general health and well-being, 7-8 hours of sleep is recommended each night for adults.
Sleep has 5 distinct stages (1,2,3,4 and REM) that cycle throughout the night in predicted patterns. In a typical 8 hour period of sleep, these cycles typically occur 4-5 times and last approximately 90 minutes each. Check out the graphic below to learn more about the stages.

REM Sleep: Stands for Rapid Eye Movement sleep, and is thought to be involved in the process of storing memories, learning, and balancing your mood. Notice that the amount of REM sleep (indicated by the dark shaded areas) increases with each new cycle and the longer you are asleep.

Stage 1 & 2 (Light Sleep)
- Sleep lightly and can be awakened easily by noises. Known as the “doorway to sleep”

Stage 3 & 4 (Deep Sleep)
- Is considered the “restorative” part of the sleep cycle that is necessary for feeling well-rested and energetic during the day.

Stop hitting the snooze button. Any extra sleep you may get is fragmented, making it low quality. You also prepare the body for a new sleep cycle that you won’t have time to finish—resulting in fatigue throughout the day.

REM Sleep: During 8 hours of sleep

Generally speaking, for adults sleeping on an 8 hour schedule, the first 4 hours of sleep helps to restore the physical body, while the last 4 hours of sleep restore and improve the mind through stabilization of emotions, thoughts, and mood as well as for learning, memory formation and organization.
Napping

Naps are an excellent way to recharge your brain and give you a burst of energy. However you need to be sure your naps are working for you rather than against you. Follow these tips to get the most out of your naps:

- **Keep naps to less than 1 hour**
  For most people it takes on average 45mins. to an hour to enter stage 3 & 4 (deep sleep). Napping for longer than 1 hour and waking up while in a deep sleep stage will leave you feeling more groggy and disoriented and negatively impact your sleep quality and cycles later at night.

- **Keep naps to before 3pm**
  Napping too late in the day can negatively affect your sleep length later at night.

- **A short nap of just 20-30 minutes is best for short-term alertness and improved mood.**

- **If you already have trouble sleeping at night, napping during the day can disrupt your sleep quality even more. Talk with a health care provider about your sleep problems.**

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Let the sunshine in—exposure to bright, natural light is the best way to wake your brain up every morning. Get outside if possible!

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**Consider this...it normally takes 3 days to fully recover from one “all-nighter”!**

- **DAY #1**
  May feel a little tired, but generally “okay”.

- **DAY #2**
  “Dragging”
  Essentially a wasted day where nothing seems to get done.

- **DAY #3**
  Starting to feel a little better but still “off” a bit.

Skip “all-nighters” the cost is too high!
Sleep BEFORE learning helps prepare the brain for initial formation of memories.

Sleep AFTER learning is essential to help cement new information into the brain.

Less than 4 hrs. sleep barely meets physical needs and little to no memory formation/consolidation is happening!

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AURORA UNIVERSITY WELLNESS CENTER

The “Invest in Rest” campaign is part of the AU Wellness Center’s Wellness Works program which encourages students to eat right, sleep well and manage stress.

Contact the Wellness Center if you would like to schedule your FREE Sleep Screen or learn more ways you can improve your sleep.

Location: House @1400 Southlawn
Phone: 630.844.5434
Fax: 630.844.5611
E-mail: wellness@aurora.edu
Hours: 8:30am-4pm (Mon. - Fri.)

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