

Apr
2022

Sleep Health

The stages of sleep

Sleep is incredibly complex and has an impact on virtually all systems of the body. Within a minute after falling asleep, notable changes start to affect both your brain and body. All of these changes that happen during sleep are connected with your physical, emotional, and mental health. You should get 7-9 hours of sleep each night to allow your body to properly cycle through the 4 stages of sleep:

Stage 1 (shallow sleep): Your muscles start to relax, and your breathing slows. It is easy to wake up during this stage of sleep, and it lasts 1-5 minutes.

Stage 2 (light sleep): Your breathing and heart rate continue to slow down. You spend the most time in stage 2 sleep throughout the night. This stage of sleep lasts 10-60 minutes.

Stage 3 (deep sleep): Deep sleep is required to feel rested. You spend more time in stage 3 earlier in the night. This stage of sleep lasts 20-40 minutes.

Stage 4 (Rapid Eye Movement/REM sleep): This stage is associated with heightened brain activity, quick eye movements under the eyelids, and an increased heart rate. This stage of sleep is where vivid dreams occur.

It is common to briefly awaken several times throughout the night, but it shouldn't impact how rested you feel in the morning. If you find that you are waking too often during the night, try to develop healthy habits that can improve your sleep.

Establishing a stable sleep pattern can improve your sleep quality. Choose a specific time to wake up in the morning and a specific time to go to bed each night. If you get in bed and find yourself unable to sleep, then get out of bed. Extended time in bed can lead to tossing and turning. Lying in bed for long periods of time may also train yourself to remain awake in bed. Sleep happens naturally, and it is best to go to another room and return only when you are sleepy enough.

Another way you can improve your sleep quality is by only using the bedroom for sleep. Avoid watching TV, reading, or other activities that keep your mind awake. Do not plan activities, work, or solve problems while in bed. By engaging in activities that require alertness while in your bedroom, you are training yourself to stay awake. It's best to make your bedroom a comfortable, dark, quiet place meant for only sleeping.

If you are struggling with sleep, talk to your healthcare provider. They will be able to assess your current health for underlying conditions or sleep disorders. They may also be able to talk to you about daily habits that can have an impact on your sleep.

Source: Sleep.org, SleepFoundation.org

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Sleep Checklist

Establishing a sleep routine can be difficult. Where do you even start? Use the checklist below to find new ways to make your bedroom more suitable for sleep, or find new habits to add to your sleep routine. You don't have to do everything on this checklist, but it is a great guide for healthy sleep hygiene ideas.

- Turn off electronic notifications
- Use nighttime mode for electronics
- Try blue light filters
- Limit screen time before bed
- Turn off lights
- Use white noise
- Meditate before bed
- Plan a bedtime schedule
- Keep temperature below 75 degrees
- Wear a sleep mask
- Wear earplugs
- Do not nap during the day
- Stop drinking caffeine 4-6 hours before bed
- Limit alcohol intake before bed
- Use relaxing scents in your bedroom
- Listen to calm music before bed
- Use comfortable bedding
- Eliminate clutter

Source: [Sleep.org](#), [SleepFoundation.org](#)

Listen to the [guided meditation](#) included in this article to help you sleep.
Here are [4 ways](#) you can sleep through the night.
Learn how [technology](#) is harmful for sleep patterns.

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