

# Sleep Facts

Although a critical component of optimal health, sleep is often under-emphasized in our fast-paced, always on the run, society. The following facts are from The National Sleep Research Project, “Forty Sleep Facts You Probably Didn’t Know... (or were too tired to think about)”

- Seventeen hours of sustained wakefulness leads to a decrease in performance equivalent to a blood alcohol level of 0.05% (legal limit is 0.08% in most states).
- Exposure to noise while you sleep can suppress immune function, even if you don’t wake.
- Some sleep aids suppress REM sleep, which can have harmful long-term effects.
- Any light, even from a digital clock, can be disruptive to the sleep cycle, even if you do not fully wake. Light turns on/off a “neural switch” in the brain, causing levels of sleep chemicals to decline within minutes.
- Studies show that women need one more hour of sleep per night than men; not getting it may be one reason women are more susceptible to depression than men.

## Sleep Tips

- Make sure room is cool and dark.
- Get rid of digital clocks or cover them before you go to sleep.
- Don’t listen to music while you sleep. Use a timer so it will shut off after 15 minutes if you *must* have it to fall asleep.
- Remove the television from the bedroom and don’t watch television for 30-60 minutes before bed (due to over-stimulation)
- During the hour before bed, use dim lighting and do mindless task such as dishes, folding laundry or drinking tea while reading a light magazine.
- Reserve the bedroom only for sleeping.
- Don’t eat large meals 2 hours before bedtime, preferably only protein (i.e., nuts, turkey) if needed. The human body needs 6 hours of sleep to “heal” from the stress of everyday life (not to mention illness!). If you schedule in 6 hours but eat before bed, your body spends the first 2-3 hours digesting and gets only 3 hours of actual “sleep” and restoration time. This may lead to illnesses such as depression, fibromyalgia, etc., as well as decreased DNA repair time.
- Try to keep pets out of the bedroom or at least off the bed to avoid allergens, “space occupying nuisances,” random barks, etc.
- Clean sheets weekly.
- If you have trouble falling asleep, practice relaxation exercises and mind-clearing techniques. For example, lie perfectly still and put your body parts to sleep one by one from the bottom up. (i.e., “my foot is completely asleep...my ankle is completely asleep...)
- Limit caffeine, nicotine and alcohol before bedtime.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes per day and not less than 3 hours before bed.
- If you still can’t sleep, ask your naturopath for some special remedies.



*Because Everyone's Journey IS Different*