

SLEEP

Improving Sleep

Sometimes sleep problems undermine college students' efforts to improve their academic performance. Try taking these practical steps to improve the quality of your sleep. If these steps don't work, consider consulting with someone at the [Student Health Center](#) or [Counseling Center](#).

- ◆ Unless directed by a health professional, avoid using over-the-counter or prescription sleep medications. While medications can be useful in the short-run, some medications can be habit forming, disrupt the quality of sleep, and/or produce troubling side-effects.
- ◆ Establish a consistent sleep schedule. Go to bed and get up at regular times every day, even on weekends.
- ◆ Avoid naps—a midday nap can lead to difficulty getting to sleep that evening.
- ◆ Only use your bed for sleeping—don't use it for reading, watching TV, or other activities. Doing this will help you develop a strong association between being in your bed and sleeping.
- ◆ If you don't fall asleep within 30 minutes after going to bed, get out of bed and engage in a boring activity (e.g., read a boring text book) until you find yourself ready to sleep. Avoid allowing your bed to become a place of “tossing and turning.”
- ◆ Do something relaxing before bedtime. Try taking a hot bath or shower, try listening to relaxing music, or try doing a [relaxation exercise](#).
- ◆ Regular physical exercise often improves sleep, but don't engage in vigorous exercise within a few hours of your bedtime.
- ◆ Avoid alcohol and other drugs. Review the labels of any over-the-counter or prescription medications you are taking to see if any of these might be disrupting your sleep.
- ◆ Don't drink anything that contains caffeine.
- ◆ If getting up to urinate during the night is a problem, avoid drinking fluids a few hours before bedtime.
- ◆ If you suffer from heartburn at night, eat your evening meal early, and avoid foods that trigger your heartburn.
- ◆ If noise keeps you up, try using ear plugs or a "white noise" machine (a small fan can work), or play restful background music or nature sounds.