



## *Healthy Sleep*

It is essential and crucial that we as nurses are mindful of ourselves. The ANA defines a healthy nurse as one who actively focuses on creating and maintaining a balance and synergy of physical, intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, personal and professional well-being.

*“A good laugh and long sleep are the two best cures for anything.” Irish Proverb*

With healthy sleep, we can be a healthy nurse and achieve balance. The following are the basics of good sleep habits:

1. **Be consistent** - A good way to sleep well is to train your body to go to bed and get up at similar times every day. This regular rhythm will make you feel better and will give you balance.
2. **Get up and try again** - If you can't sleep after 20 minutes or more, get up and do something calming or boring until you feel sleepy, then return to bed and try again.
3. **Avoid caffeine** - It is best to avoid consuming any caffeine (in coffee, tea, cola drinks, chocolate and some medications) or nicotine for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed.
4. **Bath time** - Taking a hot bath 1-2 hours before bedtime can help you feel sleepy. The hot bath will raise your body temperature and as your body temperature lowers you will feel sleepy.
5. **No clock-watching** - Checking the clock during the night can wake you up and reinforces negative thoughts such as “Oh no, look how late it is, I'll never get to sleep” or “It's so early, I have only slept for 5 hours, this is terrible.”

Thank you for being part of healthy nurse, healthy nation movement!

*Laura Mularz, Jillian Bailey, Linda Gural, and the Healthy Nurse, Nation-NJ Team*

## **Sleep and Your Senses**

Adequate sleep is essential to human health and necessary for mental alertness and ultimately safety. Do you know when you are sleeping you are actually still using your five senses? The National Sleep Foundation has tips for using all five senses to get a restful sleep.

**Sight-** Are comfortable is your bedroom? Is it a sanctuary that makes you feel relaxed and peaceful? Taking care of your sleep environment can make you feel more restful. How much light is in your room when you wake? A dark bedroom is important to getting a good sleep, according to 73 percent of Americans. Light and dark are powerful cues that tell your body it's time to rest or get up.

**Hearing-** While you sleep, your brain continues to register and process sounds-causing you to wake, move or shift. A quiet bedroom is important to a good night's sleep, according to 74 percent of Americans. White noise works by reducing the difference between background sounds and a "peak" sound like a door slamming. Creating a quiet environment is key to a full rest.

**Taste-** What you eat and drink before bed can affect your sleep. For example, foods containing amino acid tryptophan which are building blocks of serotonin can make you drowsy. Carbohydrates make tryptophan more available to the brain, so if you're considering a light snack before bed think about whole wheat crackers with peanut butter or cereal with milk. An in contrast avoid foods with caffeine, spicy and fatty foods unless you want to stay awake.

**Smell-** There is some evidence that certain smells may have an effect on your sleep. Lavender has been shown to decrease heart rate and blood pressure. Lavender of course is not a cure for insomnia but sachets in your room could be calming. Seventy eight percent of Americans say they are more excited to go to bed if their sheets have a fresh scent.

**Touch-** Many sleep experts say that a cool room, somewhere around 65 degrees makes for the best sleep. During the night your body uses its own heating and cooling mechanisms to keep your temperature in range. Making our beds is a routine that can make sleep more meaningful. A clean, neat, comfortable bed can only support good sleep hygiene. Ninety three percent of Americans say a comfortable mattress is important to a good night's sleep.

**See the National Sleep Foundation website for additional information:**  
<https://sleepfoundation.org>

*Every time you wake from sleep you have two choices  
either to fall back to sleep and dream,  
or wake and chase your dreams.....*

Next week look for information on shift work and good sleep hygiene.

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*Laura Mularz and the Healthy Nurse, Healthy Nation-NJ Team*

## **Shift Work**

If you are working the off-shift, sleep does not have the same meaning anymore. Planning when you are going to sleep and how many hours you will get becomes a major part of your day. Shift work disorder, often referred to as a "circadian rhythm sleep disorder," is a chronic condition

directly related to evening and night shift schedule. Shift work disorder can affect your health as well as your performance and safety at work. Shift work disorder has been linked to depression, heart disease, gastrointestinal problems and obesity. The best way to avoid shift work disorder is to practice good sleep hygiene with a healthy sleep routine.

## **Good Sleep Hygiene**

- Skip the nightcap prior to going to bed. Alcohol may help you to sleep initially but it may cause you to have a disturbed sleep.
- Avoid large meals and caffeine for 3-4 hours prior to going to sleep.
- Plan for enough time to sleep 7-9 hours. Adults require 7-9 hours to achieve a healthy sleep.
- Sleep in a place that is dark, cool, comfortable, and quiet. A dark room assists your body in producing melatonin, a natural chemical which aids in the sleep process. Choose a quiet area or use white noise such as a fan or air conditioner to block out daytime noise. A cool room temperature is best for sleeping. Adjust your room temperature for day sleeping as you would for nighttime.
- Avoid screen time. This refers to television, tablets, and phones. Prepare your mind to rest along with your body.
- Develop a standard routine. Try to keep the same sleep and wake schedule every day. Wake up the same time every day. This helps to regulate your circadian rhythm and improve sleep quality.
- Don't press the snooze button on the alarm. The extra 3 to 5 minutes of restless sleeps is not long enough to enter a sleep cycle and you end up feeling groggy for the first hour of your day.
- Let the sun shine in. Opening the curtains or turning on the lights when you first wake up gives you that boost you need to start your day. The light stimulates your body to get moving and brightens your day

Healthy sleep benefits your mind and body. You will feel happier, healthier, and more energetic. Have a healthy happy day and sleep well! Additional information on Shift Work Disorder can be located at <https://sleepfoundation.org> and <https://sleep.org>

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## **What is Healthy Sleep?**

The American Nurses Association (ANA) defines healthy sleep as at least seven hours of restorative, comfortable rest daily. When you wake up from a healthy sleep you have increased energy, heightened alertness, better concentration, more stamina, better judgement, and you feel great. Healthy People 2020 reports that sleep, like nutrition and physical activity, is a critical determinant of health and well-being. Nurses understand the importance of sleep for our patients to heal and recover from surgery or an illness, yet we downplay the importance of a healthy sleep

for our own well-being. Fatigue from ‘unhealthy sleep’ can lead to a grumpy, irritable nurse and increase the incidents of medical errors.

The incidence of sleep disorders have increased in the United States over the last 30 years. The sleep schedule suffers from the demands of employment and lifestyle choices. Nurses work long hours and extra shifts to meet the demands of a dwindling healthcare workforce. Even the healthy trend of increased exercise is chosen at the expense of an hour of sleep. How many people get up early to go to the gym or jog in the morning? Sleep health promotion and education are needed to increase the awareness that adequate sleep is essential for health and a necessity for nurses. Chronic short sleep is associated with cardiovascular disease, hypertension, obesity, diabetes, and mood disorders.

ANA tips to improving sleep:

1. Avoid nicotine.
2. Keep a consistent bedtime and routine
3. Avoid alcohol and caffeine prior to bedtime.
4. Engage in relaxing activities prior to bedtime such as prayer, warm bath, calming music, and reading.
5. Get comfortable with a supportive mattress and adequate pillows.
6. Ensure your room is dark, quiet (unless you prefer soft music or white noise).
7. Keep the room at a cool but comfortable temperature.
8. If you are anxiety-prone, keep a pad of paper by bed to write down your worries, then let them go until morning.
9. Neither starve nor stuff yourself prior to bedtime.
10. Exercise earlier in the day to promote sleep.

The National Sleep Foundation is dedicated to starting a movement about the positive benefits of sleep health. Visit <https://sleep.org> and explore how getting a ‘good night sleep’ is a benefit to your health and the health of the population you serve. Additional information can be obtained at: [www.nursingworld.org](http://www.nursingworld.org) and [www.healthypeople.gov/2020](http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020)

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