



Neuroscientist Matthew Walker remarks that we have a sleep-deprivation epidemic happening. He lists the effects of insufficient sleep:

It makes you dumber, more forgetful, unable to learn new things, more vulnerable to dementia, more likely to die of a heart attack, less able to fend off sickness with a strong immune system, and more likely to get cancer, and it makes your body literally hurt more. Lack of sleep distorts your genes and increases your risk of death generally, he said. It disrupts the creation of sex hormones like estrogen and testosterone, and it leads to premature aging. And, don't forget, it contributes to weight gain!

Other than that, no big deal!

You should set a goal of no less than six hours and no more than 9 hours of sleep each night. Although it differs by individual, somewhere between 7 and 8 hours is the sweet spot.

Unfortunately, as we get older, it is harder to get the sleep we need, but we need sleep just as much, if not more, than younger people. Here are a few tips to improve your sleep:

1. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, including weekends

This has been found to be one of the most effective strategies for getting sufficient sleep regularly.

2. Avoid caffeine after Noon and alcohol after 6:00 pm.

3. Create a suitable sleep environment: dark, cool, quiet, comfortable

4. Avoid screens before bed, including smart phones, computers and laptops

5. Use techniques to relax:

- **Meditation**
- **Deep breathing techniques**
- **Writing down your worries**

Here is a relaxation technique to try:

Army Sleep Technique

Sit on the edge of your bed. Make sure only your bedside light is on, your phone is silenced, and your alarm is set for the morning.

Now relax your facial muscles. First tighten them up in a wincing motion, and then slowly let your muscles naturally loosen. And let your tongue fall any which way in your mouth.

Once your face feels like deflated putty, let gravity pull your shoulders naturally toward the ground. Let your arms dangle too, one side at a time.

While doing this, breathe in and out, listening to the sound of your breath. With each breath, let your chest relax further and then let gravity relax your thighs and lower legs.

Once your body feels like nothing more than a loosely formed lump of clay, try to clear your mind for 10 seconds. If thoughts come naturally, let them pass—just keep your body loose and limp. After a few more seconds your mind should feel clearer.

Now picture one of the following two scenarios: you lying in a canoe in a calm lake with clear blue skies above you; or you in a velvet hammock, gently swaying in a pitch-black room. If you happen to be a person who isn't great at visualization, you can instead chant the mantra, "Don't think, don't think, don't think" for 10 seconds instead.

Don't give up. Keep practicing sleep techniques until something works!

Live long. Live well.