

Sleep

getting enough?

Top Tips To Improve Your Sleep

Follow the same routine.

Try to keep your bedtime and wake time to within 1.5 hours of your regular times. So if your normal routine is to go to bed at 11:30pm and wake up at 7:30am, it would be ok to go to bed at 1:00am and wake up by 9:00am. If you go out really late you should still get up on time even if that means you only get 4 hours of sleep!

Stop using caffeine within 4-6 hours of planned bedtime.

As little as 1 cup of coffee can keep you up, reduce the amount of sleep you get, and cause lighter sleep and more awakenings. It's not just coffee – chocolate, caffeine pills, some teas, iced tea, energy drinks and colas all have caffeine.

Avoid alcohol at least 2 hours before bedtime.

It's a myth that alcohol helps you sleep – it actually reduces sleep quality.

Avoid naps.

Naps can interfere with nighttime sleep. If you really need to take a nap, make it a maximum of 1 hour, and not past 2:00 or 3:00pm.

Get regular exercise, just not within 2 hours of going to bed.

Regular exercise leads to deeper sleep. Students who exercise regularly have fewer problems with sleep.

Don't use your bedroom for things that make you anxious – like studying. Save your bed for sex and sleep.

You don't want to associate your bed or bedroom with work, papers, studying, or things that make you anxious or stressed. If you study in your bedroom (e.g. if you live in residence), you might want to try switching to the library or other locations if you're having trouble with sleep.

Go to bed only when you're feeling sleepy.

If you don't feel sleepy, try relaxation techniques (see below) and start winding down about 1 hour before bedtime.

Trouble falling asleep?

If you're unable to sleep after 20 minutes, get up and go into another room and do something relaxing until you feel drowsy. Try a bath or listening to soft music (not email or school work or anything that will make your mind race). Go back to bed when you feel very drowsy. A light carbohydrate snack might also help.

Relaxation Techniques and Tools.

Visit students.sfu.ca/health for online audio resources including guided progressive muscle relaxation, mindfulness meditation. You can listen anytime, and they can help calm you down and help you sleep.

Sleeping Pills.

Try these tips before taking sleeping pills. Some sleep medications are addictive and can have side effects that actually interfere with sleep. Before taking any sleep aids (over-the-counter or prescription) see your health care provider.

A note about sleeping in on the weekends.

It's a myth that you can make up for lost sleep on the weekend! It causes grogginess, attention and concentration problems, depressed mood, poor academic performance, and long-term sleep problems. It's much better to wake up within 1.5 hours of your regular time – even if that means you only get 4 hours of sleep!

Is it worth it to pulling all-nighter's?

Definitely not. Studies show that students get better grades when they go to sleep on time.

Get Help.

SFU's doctors and counsellor's are here to help if you continue to struggle with sleep. Visit students.sfu.ca/health