AULTCARE

SLEEP IS ALWAYS IMPORTANT, ESPECIALLY NOW

Sleep is a critical biological process, and it is always important. As we navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic, sleep is even more essential because of its wide-ranging benefits for physical and mental health.

- **EMPOWERS AN EFFECTIVE IMMUNE SYSTEM.** A solid nightly rest strengthens our body's defenses. Studies have found a lack of sleep can make some vaccines less effective.

- **HEIGHTENS BRAIN FUNCTION.** Our mind works better when we get good sleep, contributing to complex thinking, learning, memory, and decision-making. For adults and children adapting to work and school at home, good sleep can help them stay sharp.

- **ENHANCES MOOD.** Lack of sleep can make a person irritable, drag down their energy level, and cause or worsen feelings of depression.

- **IMPROVES MENTAL HEALTH**. Besides depression, studies have found a lack of sleep is linked with mental health conditions like anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Getting consistent, high-quality sleep improves almost all aspects of health, which is why it is worthy of our attention during the coronavirus pandemic.

SLEEPING WELL DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

SET YOUR SCHEDULE AND ROUTINE

Establishing a routine can facilitate a sense of normalcy even in abnormal times. Use these tips to set a schedule for your sleep.

- Wake up at the same time each day. Set your alarm, bypass the snooze button, and have a fixed time to get every day started.

- It is important to set aside time to relax and get ready for bed. It can involve things like light reading, stretching, and meditating along with preparations for bed like putting on pajamas and brushing your teeth.

- Pick a consistent time to turn out the lights and try to fall asleep.

RESERVE YOUR BED FOR SLEEP

Sleep experts emphasize the importance of creating an association in your mind between your bed and sleep. Avoid bringing a laptop to bed if you are working from home or watching a movie.

Frequently changing your sheets, fluffing your pillows, and making your bed can keep your bed feeling fresh, creating a comfortable and inviting setting to doze off.

SEE THE LIGHT

Exposure to light plays a crucial role in helping our bodies regulate sleep in a healthy way. As you deal with disruptions to daily life, you may need to take steps so light-based cues have a positive effect on your circadian rhythm.

- If you can, spend some time outside in natural light. Even if the sun is not shining brightly, natural light still has positive effects on circadian rhythm.

- As much as possible, open windows and blinds to let light into your home during the day.

- Be mindful of screen time. The blue light produced by electronic devices has been found to interfere with the body's natural sleep-promoting processes. As much as possible, avoid using devices for an hour before bed.

BE CAREFUL WITH NAPS

If you are home all day, you may be tempted to take more naps. While a short power nap can be useful to some people, it is best to avoid long naps or naps later in the day that can hinder nighttime sleep.
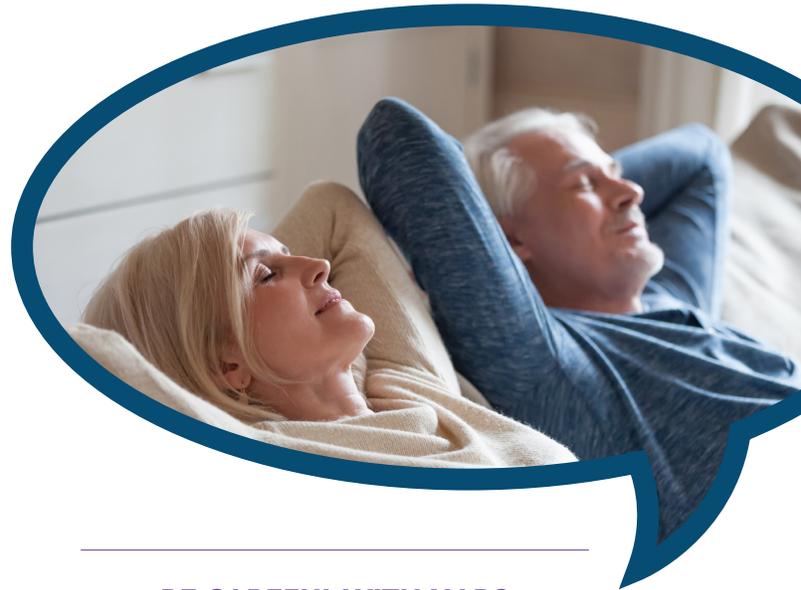
UTILIZE RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Finding ways to relax can be a vital tool in improving your sleep. Deep breathing, stretching, yoga, mindfulness meditation, calming music, and quiet reading are a few examples of relaxation techniques you should incorporate into your routine.

WATCH WHAT YOU EAT AND DRINK

Keeping a healthy diet can promote good sleep. In particular, be cautious with the intake of alcohol and caffeine, especially later in the day, as both can disrupt your sleep.

CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR IF NECESSARY

If you have severe or worsening sleep or other health problems, it is advisable to contact your doctor. Many doctors are increasing availability via email or telemedicine to allow patients to discuss concerns without having to physically visit their office.

Source: sleepfoundation.org