

Does it feel like sleep eludes you? Lack of adequate sleep has been linked to depression, weight gain and poor performance at work and at school. In the long term, chronic sleep shortage can contribute to cognitive decline and dementia. The National Sleep Foundation recommends the following sleep times:

Age	Recommended (Hours)	Not Recommended (Hours)
School Aged Children (6-13 years)	9-11	<7 and >12
Teenagers (14-17 years)	8-10	<7 and >11
Young Adults (18-25 years)	7-9	<6 and >11
Adults (26-64)	7-9	<6 and >10
Older Adults (65+)	7-8	<5 and >9

To achieve the recommended sleep for your age, follow these better bedtime practices to help you successfully slip into slumber!

Finish dinner at least three hours before bedtime: Consuming fatty, spicy foods, alcohol and caffeine right before you hit the hay will result in a poor, interrupted sleep. If you experience hunger at bedtime, choose sleep-promoting foods such as a banana, cherries or a couple of whole grain crackers. And restrict fluids to 2 hours before bedtime.

Log off and shut down: The blue light emitted from electronic devices interferes with production of the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin and makes it harder to fall asleep. While there are apps available to filter the blue light, your best option is to make your bedroom a tech-free zone and calm your mind with reading, meditation, or gentle yoga stretching.

Exercise Daily: There is a strong relationship between regular daily exercise, especially vigorous exercise, and a good night's sleep, although those new to exercise may have to wait a few weeks for the benefits to kick in. And while it is generally advised to avoid exercise right before bedtime, find a time that is suitable for you and stick to it!

Create a bedtime routine: A consistent bedtime (earlier is better) and a simple routine, such as a warm-bath and a journal entry, started 30 minutes before turning in can promote a good sleep.

