

How to Sleep Better

Montrose Regional Health Sleep Clinic • (970) 240-7101

Having Issues With Your Sleep or Quality of Sleep?

Many individuals experience issues falling asleep or staying asleep. Many of these issues are caused by your body, mind, or other factors. If you find yourself experiencing these issues, the following are possible explanations.

Body — You could be overstimulated by strenuous exercise too close to bedtime or caffeine consumption too late in the afternoon.

Mind — You could be anxious about an important project at work or excited for a vacation.

Other Factors — You could be awakened in the night by circumstantial events, like a loud storm or a neighbor playing music too loudly.

Don't allow your sleep quality define your life. There are multiple methods and techniques you can try to improve your sleep issues, such as creating a comfortable sleeping environment and establishing healthy habits, like the following.

Exercise — Putting together a regular exercise routine can help you fall asleep more rapidly and promote deeper sleep. Make sure your workouts are wrapped up over 6 hours before your bedtime to avoid over stimulation, which can lead to sleep problems. Alternatively, lack of exercise during the day can also make it more difficult to fall asleep. Talk to an expert at the MRH Sleep Clinic before establishing an exercise program.

Electronic Devices — The artificial, “blue light” created by a computer, tablet, television, or cell phone screen as well as noises from electronic devices can cause harm to your sleep. Make sure all electronic devices are shut down at least 30 minutes before you go to bed.



How to Cultivate a Healthy Sleeping Environment

The first step is to ensure your bed is comfortable and your room is dark and quiet. If you find that your room has excess light, purchase blackout curtains or an eye mask. If it is too loud, look into investing in a white noise machine or earplugs. Regarding temperature, 68°F is typically the best for quality sleep. If 68 is too hot or cold, try adjusting the temperature until you find what is most comfortable for you.

Common Perpetrators of Poor Sleep Quality

Caffeine — Caffeine is a brain stimulant that can potentially disrupt sleep. Make an effort to limit caffeine use to the morning. Frequent use during the afternoon can lead to sleep issues at night. If you find that you are having trouble falling and staying asleep, make sure to avoid exceeding 200 milligrams of caffeine a day. This amounts to about 2 cups of coffee. The most common sources of caffeine include coffee, tea, soft drinks, energy drinks, chocolate, and certain medicines such as many pain relievers.

Nicotine — Nicotine is another brain stimulant that can cause issues with falling and staying asleep. It can also cause poor sleep quality. Products containing tobacco, such as cigarettes and chewing tobacco, contain high nicotine content. If you decide to quit smoking, your sleep quality may decline during the withdraw period. Once your body has adjusted, you will fall asleep more rapidly and wake up less frequently during the night.

Alcohol — You may find that drinking alcohol around bedtime will help you fall asleep. However, your quality of sleep will be worse, causing you to wake up frequently. It can also cause nightmares in certain individuals.

Excess amounts will also cause headaches the following morning. Avoid consuming alcohol within 4-6 hours of your bedtime.

Food — Consuming food too close to your bedtime, unusually heavy meals, or food that hurts your stomach can be detrimental to your sleep. However, some individuals may benefit from a light snack before bedtime.

Establishing Healthy Habits For Improved Sleep

- Get up at the same time each day, including during the weekends and vacation.
- Avoid naps most of the time. If you do nap, limit the duration to less than an hour. Never lie down for a nap after 3 in the afternoon and only use your bed for sleeping, having sex, or recovering from an illness.
- Put together a consistent schedule for mealtimes, taking medications, chores, and other activities. This will help your body grow accustomed to an established routine.
- Explore routines that help you relax every night before you go to bed. Examples include a warm bath/shower, having a snack, or reading a book.
- If you have anxiety or find yourself worrying at bedtime, try to set aside specific times during the day to note your worries and purge these negative feelings from your system.
- Try your best to establish a regular sleep schedule, but don't go to bed until you are sleepy.
- If you struggle to fall or stay asleep within 20 minutes, get up. Try a relaxing activity and do not attempt to go back to sleep until you feel tired.

If the methods discussed in this handout do not help your sleep and quality of sleep, contact the MRH Sleep Clinic to discuss your issues with one of our experienced providers.