

Wellness Updates

From Healthy Merits

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Getting a good night's sleep

Your health and well-being depend on more than just diet and exercise—consistent good rest is vital to maintaining body-and-mind wellness. The recommended amount of sleep for the average adult is seven to nine hours a night. So the question is—you making sleep a priority in your life?

Creating your ultimate sleep haven

It's quite possible you might be sleeping in a bedroom that evokes feelings of chaos rather than calm. Things such as noise, bright lights and temperature can make it harder than you realize to get a restful night's sleep. Your bedroom should be quiet, dark and peaceful.

Here are some tips on how to set up your bedroom for a good night's sleep and ensure you wake up feeling refreshed:

- **Block out background noise with a fan or a sound machine.** Sounds of cars passing by, old pipes squeaking or noisy neighbors can disrupt your slumber more than you might think.
- **Install blackout shades or curtains.** Artificial light from street lamps or the sometimes-too-early morning sun can rouse you when you're not ready.
- **Try a lavender-scented eye mask, pillow or aromatherapy diffuser** to help you relax your way into sleep.
- **Use 50-60 watt lightbulbs in your reading lamps.** You don't want to doze off with an extremely bright light shining near your eyes.
- **Set your room temperature between 60-68 degrees Fahrenheit.** Being too hot or too cold can interfere with your sleep cycle.

Power down before you lay down

We live in an age of 24/7 technology. And let's face it—our reliance on technology is a hard habit to break. However, research suggests that “unplugging” before you snooze can help you sleep longer and more soundly.

The artificial light emitted from your device screen suppresses the release of melatonin, your body's natural sleep aid. Because of this, you no longer rely on natural sunlight to set your internal clock. Additionally, checking social media, emails or watching television keeps your brain active instead of letting it wind down.

Take charge of your sleep by simply powering down your technology 30 minutes before going to bed. Make your bedroom a screen-free zone, and charge your phone in another room overnight so that you're not tempted to “quickly check” your emails or social media accounts.

Questions?

We're here to help. For more information, just visit www.healthymerits.com. You can also call Healthy Merits Customer Service at 1.877.348.4533 or email healthymerits@meritain.com.



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Develop a sleep routine

It's 3:00 a.m. You've gotten out of bed for the third time to use the bathroom. Between uncomfortably tossing and turning and battling racing thoughts, you just can't seem to fall into a deep slumber.

Sound familiar? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than one-third of Americans do not get enough sleep on average. The good news is just a few tweaks in your bedtime ritual can help you get better rest.

Here are some simple habits you can target to achieve the recommended seven to nine hours per night:

- Try to keep to a consistent sleep schedule, even on weekends.
- Avoid stimulants before bedtime. Things such as nicotine, caffeine and alcohol can hinder your rest.
- Don't go to bed hungry or too full.
- Limit drinking before bed to avoid waking up throughout the night.
- End screen time 30 minutes before bed. Bright, artificial lights on mobile devices, computers and televisions can interfere with sleep.
- Clear your mind. If you're struggling with racing thoughts, try to calm them by meditating or journaling.
- Fit in exercise during the day. It will help you sleep better at night.

Lights out challenge

Go to bed at the same time every night!

This challenge invites you to go to bed at the same time (give or take 30 minutes) each night for 30 days. Scientists have found that people with inconsistent sleep patterns had a raised pulse rate and increased levels of harmful stress hormones. Best of all, being fully rested helps you feel better and enjoy life!

Day 1 Bedtime	Day 2 Bedtime	Day 3 Bedtime	Day 4 Bedtime	Day 5 Bedtime	Day 6 Bedtime
Day 7 Bedtime	Day 8 Bedtime	Day 9 Bedtime	Day 10 Bedtime	Day 11 Bedtime	Day 12 Bedtime
Day 13 Bedtime	Day 14 Bedtime	Day 15 Bedtime	Day 16 Bedtime	Day 17 Bedtime	Day 18 Bedtime
Day 19 Bedtime	Day 20 Bedtime	Day 21 Bedtime	Day 22 Bedtime	Day 23 Bedtime	Day 24 Bedtime
Day 25 Bedtime	Day 26 Bedtime	Day 27 Bedtime	Day 28 Bedtime	Day 29 Bedtime	Day 30 Bedtime

Source:

www.sleep.org; <http://www.cdc.gov/sleep/index.html>.