



Stress Awareness

As our lives get busy and we juggle many tasks, we often feel like we don't get enough sleep. Stress is your body's natural response to protecting itself, but chronic stress can have long-term effects such as poor sleep. During times of unwanted stress, relaxation techniques such as meditation can be crucial in helping your body produce a natural relaxation response.¹

Here are some meditation tips to help relieve nighttime stress:

Mindfulness meditation²

This is the process of observing feelings, thoughts, and emotions as you feel them without judgment. The key is to allow yourself to be present in the moment and not allowing your mind to wander.

Body Scan meditation²

This is a technique that requires slow concentration on parts of your body and noticing all sensations and pains. To practice this technique, you should focus on a specific part of your body one at a time. You can start from head to toe or any random part of your body.

Guided meditation²

This is when you are verbally guided through a meditative experience and encouraged to visualize a calming location. These guided meditations can include music or nature sounds to help relax you.

Tip: YouTube has a vast selection of guided meditation videos and sleep aid videos where you can find a video that works best in relaxing you.

10 WAYS MEDITATION CAN IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP

Tired of tossing and turning in bed at night? Sick of counting sheep? Scientists now confirm that meditation can help you get that deep, restful sleep you've been longing for. Check it out!

MEDITATION CAN HELP YOU FALL ASLEEP EASIER, AND STAY ASLEEP LONGER BECAUSE IT:

- Reduces inflammation
- Triggers the relaxation responses in the body
- Reduces breathing rate and heart rate
- Reduces pain
- Reduces psychological distress
- Reduces levels of stress hormones in the bloodstream
- Leads to fewer nighttime awakenings
- Increases time spent in deep stages of sleep
- Reduces patterns of overthinking
- Reduces negative emotions

STATISTICS

- In a recent study, practitioners of SKY Breath Meditation spent triple amount of time in deeper stages (stages 3 and 4) of sleep when compared with an age-matched control group
- Meditation can reduce the stress hormone cortisol by up to 58%, allowing for better sleep
- Meditation reduces clinical anxiety by 41% and non-clinical anxiety by 23%, allowing you to sleep deeper, longer

DIVE DEEPER INTO THE BENEFITS OF MEDITATION [AOL.F.ME/INTRO-10](https://www.airforcemedicine.af.mil/research)

To learn more, visit www.airforcemedicine.af.mil/research

1. American Psychological Association. (2013). Stress and Sleep. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2013/sleep#:~:text=Adults%20who%20sleep%20fewer%20than,6.2%20hours>
 2. Fry, A. (2022). How to Relieve Stress for Bedtime. Sleep Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene/how-to-relieve-stress-for-bedtime>



Personal Message From Your Health Promotion Health Myth Busting Team



Dear Health Myth Busters,

I try to go to bed early every night but find myself still so tired even if I managed to get to bed at a reasonable time. I wake up groggy and I have no idea why. Sometimes work and life in general can get extremely stressful, and I find myself trying to de-stress instead of going to sleep. There were a couple weeks recently where it was especially stressful at work, and I was not getting enough sleep. Is there a reason that even though work has slowed down now, and I am able to get at least 8 hours of sleep every night that I am still so tired?

Respectfully,
Wishful Sleeper

Dear Wishful Sleeper,

You are not alone in the sleep deprivation area. More than one-third of Americans get less than the recommended seven hours of sleep every night.¹ Being in an extended state of sleep deprivation is also known as sleep debt. For example, if you need 8 hours of sleep per night but only get 6, then you are in 2 hours of sleep debt and as time goes on and you are not getting enough sleep your sleep debt accumulates.¹ The most common things that people do that leads them to miss sleep are work hours, commuting, socializing, simply relaxing, or watching TV so you want to make sure to minimize these activities if you can when it comes to bedtime.¹ It is important to learn how much sleep your body needs and prioritizing sleep in the best way you can to avoid accumulating sleep debt.¹ Sometimes it seems like you need to sacrifice sleep to get some studying done or some other tasks done but you need sufficient sleep to improve cognitive performance and to be more efficient during the day.¹ Here are some ways to help improve your sleep hygiene:

- **Keep a set sleep schedule.** This will prioritize your sleep and ensure you get enough rest. If you need to change your schedule do so by adjusting in small increments of 15 to 30 minutes.¹
- **Develop a nightly routine.** Having a nighttime routine helps your body relax and prepare for sleep. Set an alarm for 30 minutes or an hour before bed to remind you to get into relaxation mode.¹
- **Consider daytime habits.** If you are always sleep deprived, it is time to rethink your daytime activities that may contribute to your sleep problems. Make sure to get enough sunlight and exercise throughout the day, do not drink caffeine close to bedtime, and limit screen time before bed.¹ While exercise can help tire you out, make sure to do it at least 2-3 hours before bedtime to allow your heart rate to settle back down.
- **Improve bedroom environment.** Turn your bedroom into the perfect sleeping place. Keep the temperature comfortable (60-67 degrees Fahrenheit) for sleeping, block out any lights or noises that might keep you up, or consider replacing your mattress, pillow, or sheets.¹ For those who do enjoy some noise, using white noise (there are a ton of videos of this on YouTube) can help block out unwanted sounds.

Sincerely,
Health Myth Busters

1 Newsome, R. (2023). Sleep Debt and Catching Up on Sleep. Sleep Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/how-sleep-works/sleep-debt-and-catch-up-sleep>

Got questions on other health issues related to sleep health, physical activity, tobacco, or nutrition? Share them with us and we will help you “Bust The Myths!” Send your questions to usaf.jbsa.afmsa.mbx.hpo@mail.mil. Make sure to include in the subject line “Health Myth Buster.” For more online health tips visit the Air Force Health Promotion webpage <https://www.airforcemedicine.af.mil/Resources/Health-Promotion/>



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Community Events

HERE'S WHAT'S GOING ON WHERE YOU LIVE

Your Local Health Promotion Office



Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday