



8 Tips to Sleep Better and Wake Up Refreshed



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Stuart F. Quan, MD, Clinical Director of the Division of Sleep and Circadian Rhythm Disorders at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH).

Healthy eating and physical exercise are essential to good health, but many of us overlook the importance of sleep. Inadequate sleep can affect mood, disrupt concentration, and upset hormones that regulate weight.

“Sleep deficiency may also increase the risk for diabetes, atherosclerosis and some forms of cancer,” says [Stuart F. Quan, MD](#), clinical director of the [Division of Sleep and Circadian Rhythm Disorders](#) at Brigham and Women’s Hospital (BWH).

Dr. Quan cares for patients with sleep disorders, including insomnia, sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome, and narcolepsy. Below are tips he shares with patients for

sleeping better.

#1 – Make a commitment to sleep better

Developing healthy sleeping habits starts with commitment. Tell a friend or loved one that you are prioritizing sleep and that you are going to make the necessary lifestyle changes to sleep well. Telling others will keep you accountable and make you more likely to stick with your goal.

#2 – Establish a Bedtime Routine

Establishing regular sleep habits can be just as important as how long you sleep. Aim to go to bed and wake up at the same time everyday, even on weekends.

“In terms of how long you should sleep, there’s variability from person to person, but the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and the Sleep Research Society recommends that you get at least seven hours of sleep a night,” says Dr. Quan.

#3 – Create a Sleep-Friendly Environment

Your room should be completely dark while sleeping. Position your bed away from windows and try blackout curtains, or use an eye mask, if the sun wakes you up early in the morning.

“Make sure your sleeping environment is quiet. If you live in an urban area or have noisy neighbors, use a white noise machine, which can counteract ambient sounds,” says Dr. Quan.

Turn off your cell phone before bed, or activate the ‘do not disturb’ setting. In general, try not to use electronics in bed.

#4 – Keep Your Bedroom Cool

There’s some variability in preferred sleeping temperatures, but the aim should be between 65 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Find the temperature that’s right for you, and set your thermostat to that degree.

#5 – Exercise Regularly

Most studies show that regular exercise three-to-four times a week helps improve sleep. It’s usually best to exercise in the morning, or afternoon. If you exercise at night, try not

to exercise within two hours of bedtime, as the adrenaline may disrupt your sleep.

#6 – Avoid Heavy Meals Before Bedtime

Avoid eating a heavy meal before bed. This includes foods high in carbohydrates, which may lead to heartburn or bloating, both of which can cause discomfort and disrupt sleep.

#7 – Morning Light Exposure

Exposing yourself to sunlight each morning will help keep you alert throughout the day. It will also regularize your sleep schedule, says Dr. Quan.

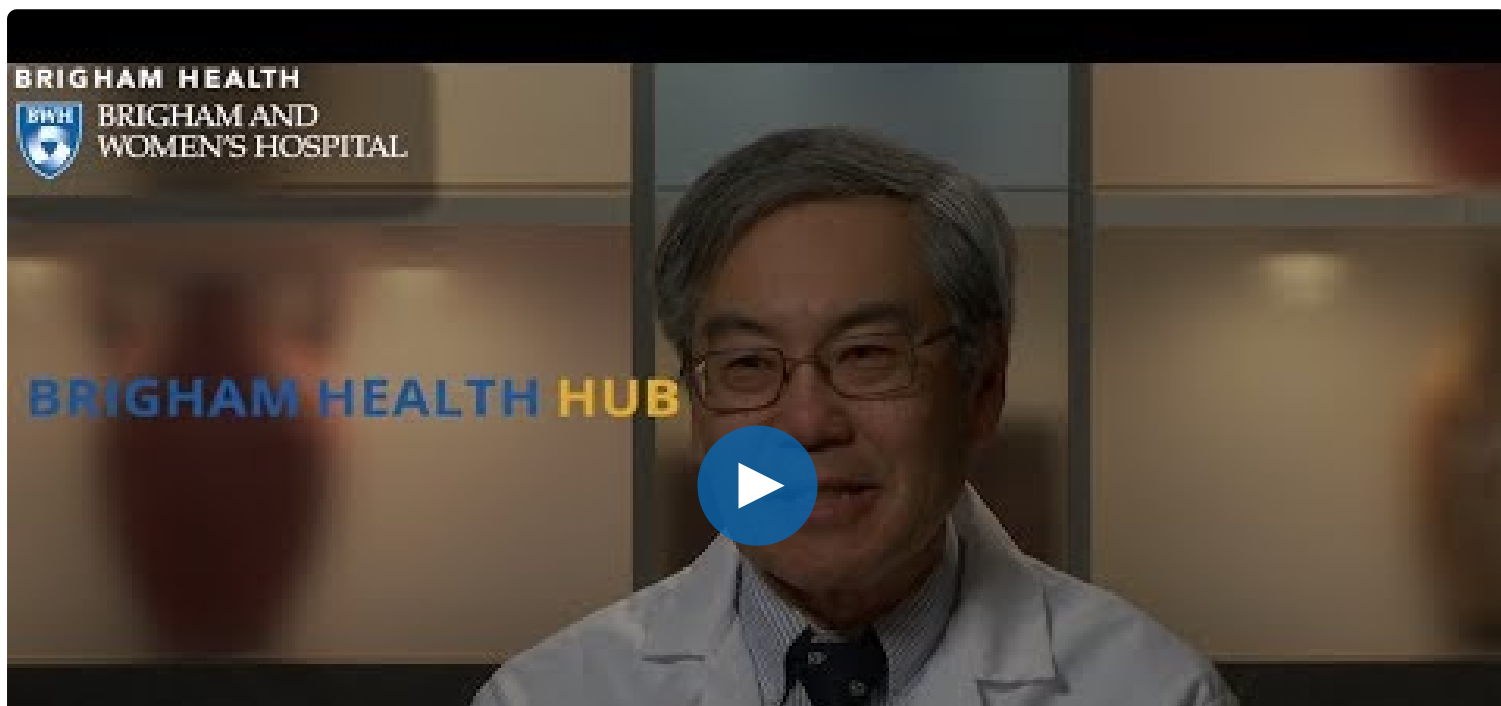
In the winter, try sitting in front of a light-therapy box for 30 minutes. In the summer, go for a walk in the morning. Leave your sunglasses in your pocket to expose your eyes to the light.

#8 - Limit Nicotine and Caffeine

The nicotine in cigarettes increases heart rate and brain activity and can disrupt your sleep. If you are having trouble quitting, you may want to try a [smoking cessation program](#).

“Caffeine is a stimulant and stays active in the body for roughly six hours. If you drink coffee at 5 p.m., it’s still having an effect at 10 p.m. when you go to bed. If you’re sensitive to caffeine, stop drinking coffee or soda around lunchtime,” says Dr. Quan.

- Dustin G.





In this video, Stuart F. Quan, MD, clinical director of the Division of Sleep and Circadian Rhythm Disorders at BWH, provides tips to help you sleep better.

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