

## 17+ SLEEP TIPS FROM THE SLEEP EXPERT

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During times of increased stress and anxiety, it often becomes difficult to get the proper amount of sleep to sustain your wellbeing.

Dr. Michael Perlis, head of behavioral sleep medicine at the University of Rochester, an expert on insomnia, has plenty of advice to offer on how to get the rest you need while steering clear of sleep problems.



1. **Get more exercise**--physical and mental. It primes the sleep homeostat. It's a myth that exercise at bedtime is bad. Sex is, among other things, a great exercise.
2. **Set a regular bedtime**--and keep it. Your body needs reliability.
3. **Set up conditions so that you catch the wave of sleep.** Sleep has to be permitted. Take obstacles out of the way, and give up the notion that you can control sleep.
4. **Learn simple meditation** and practice it before bedtime; it cuts down nervous system arousal.
5. **Put sleep in the background** of your life. Don't monitor it, don't evaluate it.
6. **Jack up your body temperature** with a warm bath before bed. Exaggerating the normal drop in body temperature that accompanies lying down abets sleep.
7. **Keep your bedroom dark**, especially as you get older. Even small amounts of light and noise can disturb sleep as you age.
8. **Don't overheat your environment.** Sleep loves cold. Keep your bedroom cold but load up on blankets.
9. **Less is more.** The less you do in response to a bout of sleeplessness, the faster your sleep patterns will return to normal.
10. **Keeping your wake-up time constant** but going to bed one hour later will help 25% of insomniacs in one to two weeks. Prepare to feel sleepy at times and avoid driving then. After two weeks, add back the time in half-hour increments.

11. **Look on two or three nights of insomnia as a gift**--the gift of time you wanted to get done all that you have to get done. Insomnia may be functional, a signal that you need to attend to what got you up.
12. **Don't fight the insomnia.** The homeostat makes sleep a self-reparative system--if you stay out of its way.
13. **Don't worry about the consequences of not sleeping.** Worrying about insomnia can create insomnia.
14. **Don't sleep with your pets!** Animal dander can create allergies that manifest only at night, and the movement of any pet on your bed can wake you up.
15. **Do not sleep later to make up for lost sleep.** It de-primed the sleep homeostat and reduces pressure for sleep the next night, turning a night of sleeplessness into insomnia.
16. **Don't make up for a night of sleeplessness by napping.** That undermines the sleep homeostat and makes it less likely you will sleep through the next night.
17. **Don't make up for an acute bout of insomnia by going to bed early.** Do not try to induce sleepiness by drinking alcohol. Yes, it's a great relaxant--but it is metabolized so quickly it creates rebound insomnia within the night; it's so fast-acting you'll be up in four short hours.
18. **Limit caffeine to one cup of coffee in the morning.** At age 18, caffeine has a half-life of 4.5 hours, which increases with age. Gradually eliminate caffeine altogether if you have trouble sleeping.
19. **Warm milk really works!** (This is Dr. Jane's re-discovery of the old wives' remedies)

*Dr. Jane Bolton, a marriage and family therapist, master results coach and contemporary psychoanalyst and is dedicated to supporting people in the fullest self expression of their Authentic Selves. This includes Discovery, Understanding, Acceptance, Expression, and Empowerment of the Self. Call 310.838.6363 or visit [www.Dr-Jane-Bolton.com](http://www.Dr-Jane-Bolton.com) .*