

Cheat Sleep!

When you are feeling stressed and “wired”:

- ✓ Call the MIT Sleep and Relaxation Line: 617-253-CALM (2256) for a relaxing recorded message.
- ✓ Download the [Bedtime Relaxation](#) or [Yoga Nidra](#) recordings from Community Wellness.

How much sleep do I need?

- ✓ Teenagers need 8–10 hours and adults need 7–9 hours on average per night. Individual sleep requirements to feel rested, productive, and healthy will vary but the American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends a minimum of 7 hours. (*CDC, AASM*)
- ✓ Large-scale studies connect an average of 7 hours (or more) per night with better physical and mental health. Short sleep duration (<7 hours per night) is associated with greater likelihoods of obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, frequent mental distress, and death. (*CDC, 2016*)

Work, Friends, Sleep — pick 3

- ✓ Sleep consolidates memories, protecting them against decay. This can help maximize academic performance and efficient studying. Inadequate sleep impairs cognition and productivity. It also changes the brain to exacerbate stress, depression and anxiety (*Walker, Why We Sleep, 2018*).

How to take a “power nap”

- ✓ Napping can be refreshing but can also disrupt your circadian rhythm (the body’s natural sleep-wake cycle). To get the maximum benefit with the least disruption:
 - Try to time your nap about **8 hours** after you wake up.
 - Try to sleep for around **20-30 minutes**. This keeps you within the early, lighter stages of sleep.
 - Really sleep-deprived? Nap for a full sleep cycle of **90 minutes**.
 - If sleep problems persist for **more than 2 weeks**, contact a medical professional.

How to get the best quality sleep

- ✓ Get sunlight in the early part of the day. Have breakfast by a window, sit near a window in your morning classes, and walk outside instead of taking the tunnels.
- ✓ Practicing a relaxation technique during the day can improve sleep efficiency — you’ll fall asleep more quickly once you go to bed (*Sleep 2009*). Download [Relax](#) from Community Wellness and learn to practice letting go of stress.
- ✓ Getting the minimum recommended amount of exercise (150 minutes per week) improves sleep quality by 65% and reduces sleepiness during the day. (*Oregon State University, 2011*). Various studies indicate the benefits of exercise for sleep quality —

except for vigorous exercise within an hour of bed. The body needs time to cool off to initiate sleep.

- ✓ Keep your bedroom cool, dark and quiet. College students have been found to sleep more deeply with a “white noise” device to create a consistent sound screen that blocks out noisy hallmates. Download [free white noise](#), get a white noise app, or use a white noise machine or fan.
- ✓ Sleep goes in cycles throughout the night and the body needs to go into a slower brainwave pattern in order to drift off. Stop productive activity at least 20–30 minutes before sleeping. The brain needs time to downshift from the faster brainwaves of wakefulness to the slower brainwaves of restful sleep.
- ✓ Aim to go to bed and wake up at around the **same time each day**. A study of MIT students showed that sleep regularity was tied to greater reported alertness, energy, happiness, calmness, and health. (*MIT Media Lab SNAPSHOT, 2016*)
- ✓ If you have morning classes that start at different times on different days, try to get up at the same time each weekday. You can use your extra time in the morning to finish that pset or fit in a sleep-boosting workout.
- ✓ If you haven’t slept all night, try to clear your schedule so you can **go to bed extra early the next night** to pay down your sleep deficit without further disrupting your sleep-wake cycle.

Eating and drinking and sleep

- ✓ Being either too hungry or too full can make it hard to get to sleep. High-fat and high-protein foods take longer to digest and are typically not recommended close to bed.
- ✓ Too many liquids within 90 minutes of bedtime can interrupt your sleep with bathroom trips.

Alcohol

- ✓ Can increase the stress hormone cortisol and makes sleep more fragmented = bad for relaxation and deep sleep (even if alcohol makes you sleepy, your actual sleep quality is worse). (*NIH*)

Caffeine

- ✓ Caffeine affects the sleep cycle — even though we may not notice it, caffeine can cause lighter, more fragmented sleep. (*Carrier, Sleep Medicine, Nov. 2009*)
- ✓ Caffeine has an average half-life of 5–6 hours in the body, but your mileage may vary significantly. Sleep experts recommend limiting caffeine to the morning, or cutting it out if you’re sensitive to it (feel jittery) or you experience sleep problems. (*AASM, Mayo Clinic*)
- ✓ Caffeine may increase blood pressure and cortisol (cortisol = bad for relaxation and sleep). (*Mayo Clinic*)