



## Getting a Good Night's Sleep

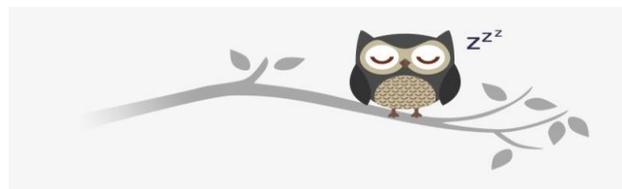
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Many view sleep as a luxury and think that the benefits of limiting the hours they spend asleep outweigh the costs. People often overlook the potential long-term health consequences of insufficient sleep, and the impact that health problems can ultimately have on one's time and productivity. Sleep and mental health are closely connected.

Many of the costs of poor sleep go unrecognized. Medical conditions, such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, develop over long periods of time and result from a number of factors, such as genetics, poor nutrition, and lack of exercise. Insufficient (or excessive) sleep has also been linked to these and other health problems, and is considered an important risk factor. Getting enough high-quality sleep may be as important to health and well-being as nutrition and exercise. Sleep problems may increase risk for developing particular mental health issues as well as result from such conditions. Do not overlook the essential and protective factoring of proper sleep hygiene. See if these might be helpful to you:

**Increase Bright Light Exposure During The Day:** Natural sunlight or bright light during the day helps keep your circadian rhythm healthy. This improves daytime energy, as well as nighttime sleep quality and duration

**Reduce Blue Light Exposure in the Evening:** Exposure to light during the day is beneficial, but nighttime light exposure has the opposite effect. Blue light — which electronic devices like smartphones and computers emit in large amounts — is the worst in this regard.



**Don't Consume Caffeine Late in the Day:** Caffeine has numerous benefits and is consumed in some form by most people. A single dose can enhance focus, energy and sports performance. However, when consumed late in the day, coffee stimulates your nervous system and may stop your body from naturally relaxing at night. In one study, consuming caffeine up to six hours before bed significantly worsened sleep quality

**Reduce Irregular or Long Daytime Naps:** While short power naps may be beneficial, long or irregular napping during the day can negatively affect your sleep. Sleeping in the daytime can confuse your internal clock, meaning that you may struggle to sleep at night.

**Try to Sleep and Wake at Consistent Times:** Your body's circadian rhythm attempts to function on a set loop, aligning itself with sunrise and sunset. Being consistent with your sleep and waking times can aid long-term sleep quality

**Don't Drink Alcohol:** Downing a couple of drinks at night can negatively affect your sleep and hormones. Alcohol is known to cause or increase the symptoms of sleep apnea, snoring and disrupted sleep patterns

**Optimize Your Bedroom Environment:** Many people believe that the bedroom environment and its setup are key factors in getting a good night's sleep. These factors include temperature, noise, external lights and furniture arrangement.

**Don't Eat Late in the Evening:** Late-night eating may negatively impact both sleep quality and the natural release of hormones helpful for sleep.

**Relax and Clear Your Mind in the Evening:** Many people have a pre-sleep routine that helps them relax. Relaxation techniques before bed have been shown to improve sleep quality and are another common technique used to treat insomnia. In one study, a relaxing massage improved sleep quality in people who were ill. Strategies include listening to relaxing music, reading a book, taking a hot bath, meditating, deep breathing and visualization.

**Take a Relaxing Bath or Shower:** A relaxing bath or shower is another popular way to sleep better.

**Rule out a Sleep Disorder:** An underlying health condition may be the cause of your sleep problems. One common issue is sleep apnea, which causes inconsistent and interrupted breathing. People with this disorder stop breathing repeatedly while sleeping. This condition may be more common than you think. One review claimed that 24% of men and 9% of women have sleep apnea.

*If you are struggling with insomnia, it might be time to discuss the issue with your doctor to allow them to ask good questions about the causes of poor sleep and make their recommendations.*

**Exercise Regularly — But Not Before Bed:** Exercise is one of the best science-backed ways to improve your sleep and health. It can enhance all aspects of sleep and has been used to reduce symptoms of insomnia. One study in older adults determined that exercise nearly halved the amount of time it took to fall asleep and provided 41 more minutes of sleep at night.

## Making quality sleep your priority

Many of us know what would be best for us and yet, don't take significant action to create the necessary benefits. Ask yourself what might be the result of doing nothing? If sleep is an issue, and you choose not to address it what might the health consequences be for you? What are the risks of doing nothing for your health, your emotional and physical resiliency and your sense of full joy and fulfillment?

If you're overwhelmed by large change, would you be able to focus on one small step. What small action can you take *today* that will move you forward? Take a small step, and get moving. Movement is rewarding and seems to encourage more movement. Now take another small step.

Proper sleep is an overlooked source of resiliency – and along with diet and exercise, it is an evidence-based factor in protecting our mental health. Let's get back to sleep as a high health priority!

**How do I book an appointment with a counsellor?  
Simply phone one of the numbers listed below. One of  
our administrative assistants will be pleased to help  
you arrange your appointment.**



305 - 394 Duncan St  
Duncan, BC V9L 3W4

### Vancouver Island Counselling

Duncan: 250 746 6900  
Nanaimo: 250 754 8222  
Port Alberni: 250 723 7001  
Victoria / Gulf Islands / Lower Mainland  
1 877 746 6911



### Counsellors' Corner

*Late to bed,  
and early to rise,  
leaves a person  
with bags under their eyes*