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## Don't Let Sleep Elude You—at Home or On the Road

Follow these strategies so you get a good night's sleep wherever you roam.

Getting a good night's sleep can be enough of a challenge when you're home and even more difficult when traveling. Since quality of sleep impacts how well you function, as well as how you enjoy vacations, it's worth taking the time to plan for good sleep.

### Daytime Steps to Nighttime Rest

How well you sleep isn't just about what happens at night. Your daytime activities actually impact your sleep. Watching what you **eat and drink** is an easy way to sleep better, according to the **National Sleep Foundation**. Caffeine lasts 5 to 6 hours in your system, so avoid it in the early evening, particularly leading up to bedtime. Alcohol is a stimulant, so drinking it close to bedtime can keep you awake. Try decaffeinated tea instead. Some hotels offer tea bags in your room or you can bring your own. Also, eating lightly in the evening assists in powering down your body for rest.

What you do right before bed matters too—especially when you're traveling. Dr. Natalie Dautovich, Ph.D., assistant professor of Counseling Psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University and environmental fellow at National Sleep Foundation says, "In order to sleep well away from home, try to maintain as much of your typical bedtime routine as possible."



Additionally, 90% of Americans report using electronics within an hour of bedtime. The blue light from electronics suppresses melatonin, making sleep elusive. Turn off electronics and read a book (avoid the Kindle), listen to music or take a bath instead.

### Adjust Your Bedroom Environment

Making your bedroom conducive to sleep will get you to dreamland faster—at home and on the road. Sleep.org recommends **darkening the room** by closing the blinds and eliminating lights from electronics. A **cool room** will help you sleep more comfortably, so set the thermostat to 65 degrees, if possible. When staying in a hotel, ask for a room away from the elevator or ice machine so that it's quieter. If you're hoping to sleep on a plane, a window seat located away from the bathrooms and galley is a quieter environment. Should you have trouble sleeping in unfamiliar surroundings, Dr. Dautovich suggests bringing "familiar items from home to make a new sleeping environment feel comfortable."

### Tuck Yourself In

So much of how well you sleep is determined by your bed. Home mattresses have a life span of 5 to 7 years, so consider replacing yours if it's old. When presented with a choice between a pull-out couch and an air mattress when visiting a friend, consider doubling up—placing the air mattress on top of the pull-out bed for extra comfort. When your hotel mattress is uncomfortable, ask if they have a foam egg crate topper, or request another room where the bed may be newer or have worn differently.



Picky about pillows? Bring your own from home (a vacuum bag can compress it in your suitcase). Some hotels have "pillow menus," allowing you to choose the material and firmness of your pillow.

The National Sleep Foundation says that three-fourths of people report **better sleep when the sheets smell fresh**. Change sheets more often at home, and request nightly changes at a hotel. Another option is to carry a small bottle of **sheet spray**, which can freshen sheets anywhere.

### Beating Jet Lag

Jet lag can disturb your **sleep cycles** when flying across time zones. Sleep.org recommends choosing a flight that arrives in the early evening and staying awake until 10 p.m. local time. If you have to nap, do so for no more than 2 hours in the early afternoon. Getting outside into the sunlight during the day will help your body recalibrate to the new time zone.

### Great Sleep Gear

Prepare yourself to meet the Sandman with this sleep toolkit:

- **Lavender lotion.** Lavender slows the heart rate and lowers blood pressure. Studies have shown people who sniff lavender oil before bed experience deeper sleep. Rub some on your hands before bed.
- **Wicking pajamas.** PJs that wick moisture keep you cool and comfortable all night.
- **Eye mask.** An eye mask lets you sleep in darkness, without worrying about curtains and blinds or when the sun rises.
- **Earplugs.** Soft foam earplugs block out any sounds around you.
- **White noise machine or sleep app.** Sometimes blocking out noise is not enough and you need white noise or the sound of waves or gentle rain to lull you to sleep.
- **Melatonin.** If your doctor agrees, this **natural sleep aid** taken 30 to 60 minutes before bed can help you sleep.
- **Neck pillow.** If you're going to sleep on a plane, train or car, a neck pillow supports your head so you can rest comfortably.
- **Travel bag.** Don't forget to pack your travel kit in a bag that's easy to access before you slumber.
- **Journal.** Don't draw any. The night before, lay out your mind, isn't it? Write as you drift off into sleep.



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