

Sleep Under Challenging Circumstances

Recommendations With Children

- **Sleep when your baby sleeps.** Silence your phone, hide the laundry basket and ignore the dishes in the kitchen sink. Calls and chores can wait.
- **Accept help.** When friends and loved ones visit, don't offer to be the host. Instead, ask if they could watch the baby while you take a nap. Utilize friends, family, childcare professionals and hospital nurseries to help you get your rest.
- **Split duties.** If possible, work out a schedule with your partner that allows each of you alternately to rest and care for the baby.
- **Don't get stuck on one method.** If co-sleeping works for you and your family, keep doing it. If it doesn't, try a crib or bassinet. Likewise, if your baby is not hungry or uncomfortable, it's OK to encourage a little self-soothing.
- **Create the best sleep environment (for you and baby).** Is the bedroom relaxing to you and baby? Try to keep clutter to a minimum and out of the bedroom. Don't feel bad if you need to take a temporary break from sleeping in the same bed with your partner. Opt for separate beds if you and your sleep partner are having bed-sharing issues. Sufficient sleep contributes to healthy and happy relationships, and sleeping in separate beds is a healthy option.
- **Don't lose hope.** By ages 3 to 4 months, many babies can sleep at least five hours at a time. At some point during your baby's first year, nighttime stretches of 10 hours are possible. In the meantime, do what you can to get the sleep you need.

RESOURCES

<https://www.healthline.com/health/sleep-consultants-share-tips-for-new-parents#The-Dos>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/infant-and-toddler-health/in-depth/healthy-baby/art-20046556>

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/insomnia/parents>

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/pregnancy>

Illness or Injury of Spouse/Partner

- **Sleep apart.** Sleep in a different room or bed than your partner. Ensure that you can hear them if they call for help.
- **Help your partner sleep.** Identify the best sleeping position to support your partner's sleep. Utilize pillows and cushions to support injuries.
- **Create self-care time.** If you must wake several times a night for caregiving and returning to sleep is an issue, consider using the time to read, meditate, or engage in another relaxing activity. Try to sleep during the day.

RESOURCES

<https://symptoms.webmd.com/cold-flu-map/sleep-better-cold-flu>

<https://www.time4sleep.co.uk/advice/how-to-sleep-when-injured>

Shift Work and Variable Schedules

- **Maintain consistency.** Sleep consistency is key for working night shift schedules. Maintain your sleep-wake schedule on your days off. Make sure significant others, children, roommates, and anyone else sharing your roof understands the importance of your designated sleep time.
- **Address light and noise exposure.** Consider blackout curtains, an eye mask, ear plugs, or a white noise machine. Unless you are on call, consider turning your phone off while you sleep.
- **Try waking up close to the start of your shift.** You can do this by staying up for a few hours after arriving home or following a split-nap schedule. This entails napping for a few hours after getting home in the morning and then sleeping for longer in the hours leading up to the next shift's start time.
- **Use bright light therapy.** This involves exposure to a special artificial light at certain times to help reinforce your body. Schedule short sessions when you first wake up and midday. You can use a special light box, desk lamp, visor or dawn simulator for light therapy.
- **Use caffeine carefully.** Consume caffeine at the beginning of your shift and stop within 3 to 4 hours of when you plan to go to bed.
- **Exercise on your break.** If you have enough time on your scheduled break, consider a quick workout to provide a boost of energy.
- **Nap on your break.** If permitted, try to take a 10-20 minute nap on your break. You can also try drinking a cup of coffee and immediately taking a 15-20 minute nap. Your wake up time will coincide with the caffeine taking effect.
- **Avoid drowsy driving.** Drowsy driving is a major hazard of shift work. Arrange to have someone pick you up at the end of your shift or take the bus or a taxi/Uber. If you must drive, consider a quick nap before driving home at the end of your shift.
- **Talk to your supervisor.** If you must work rotating shifts, talk to your leader or supervisor about a clockwise rotation where each new shift is later than your last shift. This is a more natural shift for your body.

RESOURCES

<https://www.uclahealth.org/sleepcenter/coping-with-shift-work>

<https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/features/night-shift-sleep>

<http://sleepeducation.org/essentials-in-sleep/shift-work/treatment>

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/shift-work-disorder/tips>

- **Bring comfort items.** Bring a neck pillow, blanket, or comforting items when traveling in order to sleep on a plane when flying across time zones or to sleep comfortably when at locations other than one's home.
- **Sleep strategically.** Days before you are scheduled to travel, begin moving your bedtime an hour earlier (or later, as appropriate) than you normally would. Add another hour the second evening, and a third hour on the third day. It takes one day per time zone for your body to adjust, so planning ahead can help ease the transition.
- **Abide by the two-day rule.** If you're going to be staying somewhere fewer than two days, try and keep to your own schedule. By the time your body adapts, it'll be time to come home
- **Consider lighting.** If your flight touches down first thing in the morning as you travel east, bring along a pair of sunglasses to minimize light exposure. It's preferable to get maximal light exposure in the late morning and early afternoon, which shifts your rhythms closer to your destination's time zone. The goal is to recalibrate the clock so that it is closer to bedtime at your destination. If you are traveling westward, which is less disruptive, aim for light exposure in the early evening. Eat outdoors or go for a walk to push your rhythm a bit later.

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Sleep Recommendations That Just Aren't Working



Getting Out of Bed If I Can't Sleep Is Too Disruptive to Spouse or Family

- Use white noise in bedrooms to reduce the (sound-related) disruptiveness of getting out of bed.
- Minimize disruption by setting out clothes or activities ahead of time
- Do some quiet stretching in the room, keep a book with a small, amber book light in chair nearby or go for a quiet walk.
- Do something relaxing while in bed to help fall asleep like meditation, breathing exercises, or progressive muscle relaxation.
- Get a larger mattress or one that isolates movement like a memory foam mattress or top.

RESOURCES

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-deprivation/interrupted-sleep>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/know-your-value/feature/your-partner-ruining-your-sleep-here-s-how-fix-it-ncna1044931>

I Have Difficulty Taking Naps to Reach 7-9 Hours of Sleep Per Day

- Keep naps short to avoid interfering with your nighttime sleep.
- Avoid caffeine within three hours of your nap or drink coffee and immediately nap for 15-20 minutes.
- Use blackout curtains or an eye mask and earplugs if trying to nap midday.
- Try going to sleep earlier (or waking up later) to get enough sleep if napping is not an option.
- Consider just laying down and resting and don't be too concerned if you can't fall asleep.

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But I Like Playing Video Games, Watching Tv, or Scrolling Before Bed!

- Switch to night mode or use an amber filter on phones and devices.
- Move TVs, computers, and phones away from the bedroom.
- Consider setting timers on your TV or apps.
- Allow yourself a small amount of time not close to bedtime to engage in these activities if you look forward to them.
- Pick other enjoyable or entertaining evening activities such as reading a book or listening to music or a podcast.