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Why you should be waking up at the same time every day



One of the most important things you can do to get better sleep is wake up at the same time each day. For most people, this is easiest to accomplish on the days that you must follow a regular schedule, such as for work or school. However, it is important to maintain this same schedule on your weekends or days off. In order to make this strategy effective and become a good habit, waking up at the same time of day for all seven days of the week is essential.

Why does wake time matter?

You're probably familiar with the expression "consistency is key" which appropriately applies in this case. Science helps explain the importance of a routine wake time; your body follows a circadian rhythm which is often

referred to as your “internal clock” or “body clock”. Your internal clock helps to regulate your level of sleepiness and wakefulness over a 24 hour period. It also has an effect on hormone levels, body temperature, metabolism, and your immune system. According to the National Sleep Foundation, “the circadian rhythm dips and rises at different times of the day, so adults’ strongest sleep drive generally occurs between 2:00–4:00 am and in the afternoon between 1:00–3:00 pm, although there is some variation depending on whether you are a “morning person” or “evening person.”

Waking at the same time every day stabilizes your circadian rhythm, keeping it strong so you sleep more soundly at night, and feel more awake during the day. By keeping your wakeup time constant, you should naturally become tired at the same time every night, and feel ready to wake up at the same time each morning, like a precise Swiss watch keeping accurate time. At night, this means that you will fall asleep more easily and wake up fewer times across the night, allowing your body to go through its entire sleep cycle.

In a healthy individual, the body goes through four stages of sleep (non-REM sleep) and REM sleep four to six times a night. In a guide published by The National Sleep Foundation which consulted two physicians for contributions on the topic, “having the right balance between them (the sleep stages) is believed to be important for obtaining restful, restorative sleep and for promoting processes such as learning, memory, mood, and ability to concentrate”.

How do you change your sleep schedule?

As you adjust, it’s likely that you’ll encounter some lost sleep, and may experience symptoms similar to jet lag until your circadian rhythm resets. While making changes to create new habits can be difficult, understanding the benefits of a consistent wake time can help you maintain the motivation and self-discipline it takes to make the adjustment. Remember, when you get the amount of sleep you need, and it’s good quality sleep, you’ll wake feeling more rested and alert.

The time you set to wake up is less significant than the need to make sure it’s the same each day; if you’re “night owl” who doesn’t need to rise early, there’s no need to get up at the crack of dawn. Of primary importance is to consider your body’s natural pattern and take into account your particular lifestyle needs.

In general, sleep experts such as Brandon Peters, M.D. recommend 30 days to transition to a new schedule and successfully change your body clock. While

everybody is different, most people generally need seven to eight hours of sleep each night. In order to determine what time you should go to bed, they suggest you first decide on the time you need to wake up in order to have enough time to get up and go about your day. Then subtract seven to nine hours, and you'll know what time you should go to sleep. For example, if you need to be at work by 8:00am and it takes you two hours to get ready and travel to the office, then you should rise at 6:00am. To get a solid seven hours of sleep, you need to go to bed by 10:00–11:00pm. If you feel like nine hours of sleep would make you feel better, you can plan to get to sleep by 9:00pm. Some clinicians suggest that while you try to set your new schedule, you also regulate the rest of your daily routine as well, such as mealtimes and social activities.

When your body is used to waking up at the same time each day and your circadian rhythm is set, you'll naturally feel tired at the same time each evening, making it easier to fall asleep. In addition, you may find that you no longer need your alarm clock to wake you up because your body has learned when it's time to get up. Once you've stabilized your internal clock and are getting better quality sleep, you can look forward to waking up more refreshed and better prepared for your day ahead.