

It is Never Too Late to Make Sleep Your New Years Resolution

by Mathilde Pioux, Staff Associate II

Posted on January 20, 2021



For most of us, a new year means new resolutions to fulfill. Common resolutions often include healthy eating, exercise, and personal growth. Yet, there is one imperative activity that gets overlooked each and every year. Not only is this activity free and truly satisfying, but it is also a vital biological function. Can you guess what it is?

That's right, it's sleep!

As we work hard every day to contribute to the good of society, we sometimes forget the importance of sleep. Quality sleep allows our brains to recharge and our bodies to rest and recover, which in turn promotes a stronger immune system, a sharper brain, and increased productivity, to name a few benefits. Below are some tips for a good night's sleep to feel refreshed the next day and ready to work or play.

Find your fit. The first building block to a restful slumber is finding the right mattress and pillow for your comfort levels. If you've ever been in the market for these bedroom essentials, you'll know that there are an ample number of mattress and pillow selections to choose from. Some will provide support for your body's sleeping posture while others will have you walking around the next day half bent over. These two bedroom necessities come in all different shapes, sizes, firmness levels, and materials. Spend some time learning about the different types of mattresses and pillows to determine which are most suitable for you.

Set a sleep schedule. You've probably heard the term "circadian rhythm," but what exactly is it? A circadian rhythm is your body's internal clock that notifies it when to carry out

essential functions. One such function is the regulation of your sleep-wake cycle. A disrupted circadian rhythm can lead to difficulty falling and staying asleep. Instead, set a sleep schedule in which you go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, weekends included! Adhering to a consistent sleep schedule can reinforce your biological clock to run smoothly and maintain a proper sleep pattern, allowing you to get some more quality Zzz's.

Avoid screens before bedtime. Does your evening routine often involve eating dinner, playing with the dogs, and watching television before getting some shut-eye? As the sun sets, a properly functioning circadian rhythm will inform your body to produce melatonin, a hormone that prepares your body for sleep. However, the blue light emissions from your favorite electronic devices disrupt your internal clock and suppress the release of melatonin, ceasing those feelings of sleepiness at bedtime. Instead, avoid electronic devices at least half an hour before hitting the hay, or turn on your device's night mode to reduce those blue light emissions and diminish screen brightness.

Get sunlight. A great night's sleep begins the moment you wake up. Your sleep cycle, or circadian rhythm, is heavily impacted by the amount of sunlight you receive during the day, especially those first morning hours. Just as the setting sun triggers your body to release melatonin at night, daylight exposure stimulates your body to produce cortisol, a hormone that makes you feel awake and alert. Getting direct sunlight outdoors for at least half an hour has shown to produce the most benefit. If that is not possible, bright overhead lights is another option. Luminosity helps the body balance its hormones, sequentially optimizing its biological clock. Too little sunlight during the day and too much artificial light in the evening will negatively impact your sleep at night.

Blackout your bedroom. If you can see your hand in front of your face when the lights are out, then your bedroom is not dark enough for that beauty sleep! Your skin has receptors that can pick up light. If there is light in your bedroom, your body will send messages to your brain that can interfere with your sleep. Take a moment tonight when you're in the dark to scan your room for any light sources that can be eliminated, even if that means sticking black tape over the light of that one gadget sitting near your bed. Blackout blinds are also a valuable investment if you live in an area where outdoor lights flood your bedroom. If you must have a light in your room, then a dim, red light has the least power to shift your circadian rhythm and suppress melatonin.

Sleep deprivation and poor slumber can provoke short- and long-term health consequences. It can drain our mental abilities, reduce our performance levels, and put our physical health at risk. Yet, sleep might be the easiest New Year's resolution we make! So please join me in making quality sleep not only a goal, but also a habit for the purpose of feeling better, looking better, and performing better in our daily work and personal lives. Finally, and most importantly, there is nothing the Sandman can do if you're only getting five hours of sleep each night. Feeling your best requires enough rest no matter what strategies you use for quality sleep.

The content of these pages is for general information purposes only and does not constitute advice. Heinfeld, Meech & Co., P.C. tries to provide content that is true and accurate as of the date of writing;

however, we give no assurance or warranty regarding the accuracy, timeliness, or applicability of any of the contents.