

# IMPROVE SLEEP

## Why is Sleep important for your wellness?

Sleep is medicine for our mind, body, and spirit, just like the medicine we receive from food, activity, and our friends and family. It can often be overlooked or sacrificed when we try to find balance with our health and wellness. For adults, when we sleep 7-9 hours/night, we are giving our body a chance to restore, repair, and recharge - getting us ready for the next day. Getting enough sleep supports a stronger immune system, better heart health, more brain power, and better coping ability!

## How can I improve my Sleep?

Our ability to get enough sleep can be challenged through different phases of our life i.e. childbearing years, stressful times, and Elder years. Be gentle and kind with yourself during these times. Below are some ways to support a good night's sleep: Sleep Schedules, Nightly Routines, Sleep Environment, and Daily Habits.

### SET YOUR SLEEP SCHEDULE

CREATE A CALMING  
SLEEP ENVIRONMENT



**HealthBeat**



FOLLOW A  
NIGHTLY ROUTINE



PLANT MEDICINE FOR SLEEP



DAILY HABITS MATTER



**ISPARC**  
Indigenous Sport,  
Physical Activity & Recreation Council



First Nations Health Authority



**BRITISH  
COLUMBIA**



There are many parts of our society that affect our health and lives that are beyond an individual's level of control. We want to acknowledge the social, political, economic, and environmental impacts to the health of the lands, waters, and forests, which in turn affects our health. We want you to know we are here to support you with your wellness goals and will meet you wherever you are at in your wellness journey.



## FOLLOW A NIGHTLY ROUTINE

Create and follow a pre-bedtime routine that signals your body it is time for sleep - putting on pajamas, brushing your teeth. Budget 30 minutes for winding down with relaxing activities like soft music, light stretching, reading, prayer and/or relaxation exercises as part of your routine. Avoid electronics 30 mins. to one hour before bed. The blue light they give off can affect your sleep. If you feel tempted by your electronics during the night, go for a "no phones in the bedroom" policy. Go old school and get an alarm clock! Give yourself 30 mins. to one hour at most to fall asleep. If you are still awake, get up and go to another room to read or some activity that will not wake you up further. This is to prevent your brain from associating your bed with feelings of anxiousness and restlessness. As you begin to feel tired/sleepy, go back to bed.



## DAILY HABITS MATTER FOR SLEEP TOO!

Move more - physical activity makes it easier to sleep at night! Find ways to move that you enjoy and start with small changes, as little as 10 minutes. Go for a short walk on your lunch break, do some chair exercises, try a short exercise video at home. Schedule time to relax, time for self-care, and time for activities that you love (taking a bath, art, reading, beading, writing). Caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, heavy meals, and exercise late in the day can negatively affect your sleep. Don't climb into bed during the day except to sleep (sex being the only exception) so your brain associates your bed with sleeping.



## CREATE A CALMING SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

Our body is very sensitive to light. Black-out blinds or an eye mask may help you stay asleep. Aim for a cool, comfortable temperature - open a window or turn on a fan. Drown out noise with earplugs, a fan, or a white noise machine. Use a lavender sleep pillow.



## SET A SLEEP SCHEDULE

Nurture your body's internal clock with structure. Pick a bedtime and wake-up time and try to stick with them every day, including days off, as much as possible! If you want to shift your sleep times, go for 15-minute gradual adjustments. Keep naps short (10-30 mins.) and take them in the early afternoon.



## PLANT MEDICINE FOR SLEEP

Connect with an Elder, traditional knowledge and medicine keeper, or herbalist to learn more about plants that can support your sleep like lavender, labrador tea, chamomile, mint, rose, and lemon balm.

*\*Consult with a medical professional to ensure there are no contraindications with medicine you are currently taking.*

## Where you can find more information and support



Try the 9-0 meditation practice: Breathe in deeply and breathe out slowly, saying in your mind the number 9. On the next breath out say 8, then say 7, and so on until you breathe out saying 0. Then start over, but this time start with 8 (instead of 9) followed by 7 and so on until you reach 0. Repeat until you have gone all the way down to starting with 1. Continue until you fall asleep.



Learn more about breathing & meditation:  
<https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene/relaxation-exercises-to-help-fall-asleep>  
Try a relaxation app: Calm or Headspace