

**Sleep your way  
to better health**



**CR  Í**

*Fighting Heart Disease & Stroke*

## Getting enough sleep

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As a general rule, if you wake up tired and spend the day longing for a chance to nap, you are most likely not getting enough sleep.

There is a growing emphasis on the importance of sleep and how it influences our health. Poor sleep is associated with **increased risk of obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and mental health issues.**

For the majority of people it is recommended that we need between seven to eight hours of sleep each night.



## Tips to help improve sleep

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- **Avoid stimulants.** Stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine should be avoided close to bedtime and when it comes to alcohol, moderation is key.
- **Exercise.** This helps promote good quality sleep. As little as 10 minutes of aerobic exercise, such as walking or cycling, can drastically improve nighttime sleep quality.
- **Avoid certain foods.** Steer clear of fatty or spicy foods before bedtime, these can cause heart burn or acid indigestion.
- **Get outside.** The more fresh air the better. Exposure to daylight will improve the quality of your sleep.
- **Develop a routine.** Establish a regular, relaxing bedtime routine to help the body recognise that it is bedtime. This could include taking warm shower or bath, reading a book, or doing light stretches. When possible, try to avoid emotionally upsetting conversations and activities before attempting to sleep.
- **Create an optimal sleep environment.** Make sure that the sleep environment is pleasant. Mattress and pillows should be comfortable. The bedroom should be cool, for optimal sleep. Consider using blackout curtains, eye shades or ear plugs to make the bedroom more relaxing.
- **Remove electronic devices.** Clear your bedroom of electric devices such as TVs, mobile phones etc. They can emit low frequency sounds which do not enhance sleep quality.

- **Limit bedroom use.** Keep your bedroom just for sleep, relaxation and sex. Sex makes you sleepy, this has evolved in humans over thousands of years!
- **Shift transitions.** For those on shift work, aim to manage shift transitions. For example on the last few days of an evening shift, delay going to bed and wake up an hour or two later. This can sometimes make it easier to adjust to a new shift schedule.



For more health information or to support the work at Croí, the Heart & Stroke Charity, please visit our website at [www.croi.ie](http://www.croi.ie).

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