

# SLEEP

## What happens during sleep?

Sleep is essential for good physical and mental health. In fact, most of the benefits of a good night's sleep directly impact brain functioning. Sleep helps:

- consolidate memory
- promote learning and recall
- increase problem-solving abilities
- improve concentration
- boost mood and reduce anxiety
- sharpen reaction time and accuracy
- clean cellular garbage in the brain



**Over 50% of WashU students reported feeling tired, dragged out, or sleepy during the day three or more days of the week.\***

\*2017 NCHA Survey

**REFRESH.  
REFOCUS.  
REACH  
OUT.**

**AIM FOR 7-9 HOURS  
OF SLEEP A NIGHT**

## Sleep Hygiene

### Daytime

- Wake up within an hour of your "normal" weekday time
- Stop caffeine use around 2 p.m.
- Soak up natural light by spending time outdoors
- Limit any napping during the day to 10-90 minutes before 5 p.m.
- Avoid doing any work in bed – your bed should be a sanctuary of relaxation
- Skip the snooze and set your alarm a little later to keep your sleep cycle uninterrupted

### Nighttime

- Set a bedtime and stick to it
- Give yourself at least 30 screen-free minutes before bed
- Avoid caffeine, sugar, chocolate, and nicotine before sleeping
- Avoid using alcohol as a sleep aid – it causes interrupted, less restful sleep
- No large meals before bed
- Focus on calming activities like reading, journaling, taking a bath, or meditating before going to bed

### Environment

- Wear clothing/use bedding that you feel comfortable in and won't make you too hot or cold while sleeping
- Eliminate noise – a fan, white noise machine or earplugs can help
- Turn your bedroom into a sleep sanctuary. Create an environment conducive to sleep by making it dark and quiet
- Make sure your bed is comfortable and your pillow and mattress don't cause neck and back pain during the night

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## 10 Ways to Improve Sleep

1. **Pay back sleep debt gradually** by avoiding morning and evening scrolling through social media feeds and let yourself sleep more.
2. **Reset your biological clock** by exposing yourself to natural light as soon as you wake up.
3. **Avoid sleeping in** until after noon on weekends – this can throw off your circadian rhythm.
4. **Deal with daily stressors.** If you find yourself worrying or thinking too much before sleeping, write your concerns down to deal with them in the morning.
5. **Learn relaxation techniques.** Meditation, yoga, progressive muscle relaxation, and deep breathing can help sleep come more quickly.
6. **Exercise!** Aim for 30 minutes, 4 or more days a week. If you feel restless at night, you may need more movement during the day.
7. **Avoid checking the clock.** This only causes arousal and makes it more difficult to sleep.
8. **Take a warm shower or bath.** This nudges nighttime biochemistry along.
9. **Be predictable.** Go to bed and wake up around the same time every day – even on weekends.
10. Discuss **prescription and over-the-counter options** with a medical provider if you're still struggling.

## Campus Resources

### Habif Health and Wellness Center

Medical Services: 314-935-6666

Mental Health Services: 314-935-6695

Health Promotion Services: 314-935-7139

### Visiting Us

Habif is on the lower level of Dardick House on the South 40 on Shepley Drive.

The Zenker Wellness Suite is in the Summers Recreation Center (room 303).

### More Information

For chronic sleep problems, you may want to consult with a psychiatrist for a medication evaluation.

[habif.wustl.edu](http://habif.wustl.edu)



Habif Health and  
Wellness Center

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STUDENT AFFAIRS AT WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY