



Getting a good night's sleep makes a world of difference

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According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), one in three American adults aren't getting enough sleep. What's enough? It varies from person to person, but the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and Sleep Research recommends at least seven hours of sleep per night. (Children and teenagers need more.) In addition to reaching a certain number of hours, sleep quality and consistency are important as well.

But if you have diabetes, getting enough quality sleep can be difficult. One 2019 study estimated that 50% of people with type 2 have trouble sleeping, with many getting under six hours a night. This can lead to increased insulin resistance, heart disease, daytime fatigue and weight gain as you reach for food high in carbs and sugar.

Finding ways to get a good night's sleep can be tough, but the mental and physical rewards of awakening refreshed in the morning can't be overestimated. **Here are a few different approaches to help you get the rest you need and deserve.**

Why is it hard to get enough sleep?

Although many people with diabetes have trouble sleeping, there are a variety of reasons why you may have sleepless nights. If you're experiencing chronic insomnia rather than occasional lack of sleep, it's a good idea to check with your medical provider who can help you analyze and address any particular issues you may have.

Here are a few common causes of sleep problems for people with diabetes:

Fluctuating Glucose Levels

High blood sugar can lead to frequent urination, which can interrupt sleep, while low blood sugar is known to cause night sweats and even nightmares. Your doctor may be able to adjust your medication or provide advice on ways to keep your blood sugar more stable at night.

Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS)

People with type 2 diabetes have a greater chance of developing Restless Legs Syndrome, marked by tingling legs and an urge to move and kick, which interrupts sleep. They can also be prone to peripheral neuropathy, which may imitate the symptoms of RLS but also cause your legs to feel numb and achy. If you're

experiencing what feels like neuropathy, it's even more important to consult your doctor to avoid long-term nerve damage..

Increased Body Weight

Disrupted sleep, scientists have discovered, causes an imbalance in ghrelin and leptin, hormones that regulate your appetite. The former makes you feel full, while the latter makes you feel hungry. Leptin levels usually rise during sleep, but if you aren't getting enough quality sleep, leptin decreases and you feel less full. Sleep disruption also causes an increase in ghrelin, which can make you hungrier throughout the day. These hormones running amuck can lead to excessive weight gain, which in turn can exacerbate issues like sleep apnea and cause greater fluctuations in blood sugar levels.

You're a Woman

Women in general have a harder time sleeping than men due to bearing and raising children as well as menopause. A recent study by Columbia University found that shortening sleep by just 90 minutes a night for six weeks in women who were used to getting regular sleep increased insulin resistance by 12% overall—15% for postmenopausal women.

What can you do to get more sleep?

Try following these tips to improve your sleep routine.

Keep a regular bedtime.

Going to bed at the same time every night (just as your parents probably tried to get you to do as a kid) helps set your body's circadian rhythm, or natural body clock. So does waking up at the same time. This will lead to shorter sleep onset (less tossing and turning before you fall asleep) and more stable sleep.

Keep naps down to 20 minutes.

The temptation to nap can be overwhelming if you're had a bad night's sleep, but try to keep naps down to 20 minutes and nap no later than early afternoon. Otherwise, a nap can interfere with your ability to get enough sleep at night.

Turn off that computer.

Studies have shown that smartphone, tablet or laptop blue light can alter your metabolism and is linked to an increase in insulin resistance. Shut all your devices down 30 minutes before bedtime.

Exercise regularly.

Exercise is particularly good for sleeping, since your body temperature increases during a workout and then decreases later in the day, which makes you feel drowsy. Even as little as ten minutes of aerobic exercise a day can help improve your sleep. It's good to complete your workout at least an hour before bedtime or your nervous system may still be too stimulated for you to fall asleep.



Be aware of your stress levels.

Stress is a notorious cause of poor sleep. If you suffer from insomnia, try to find ways to de-stress before bedtime—deep breathing and meditation can work, as can soft music or a white noise device that plays restful sound patterns like ocean waves or gentle rain.

What about sleep aids?

Herbal teas, chamomile in particular, can help you fall asleep. Many people with diabetes also take low doses of melatonin. In general, medical practitioners shy away from prescribing sleeping pills to people with type 1 diabetes in case they sleep through a severe low glucose event. For people with type 2, much depends on their general health. However, before trying any type of sleep aid, even "natural" ones, it's important to consult with your doctor.

Sources: <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/library/features/diabetes-sleep.html> | <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/physical-health/lack-of-sleep-and-diabetes> | <https://www.webmd.com/diabetes/type-2-diabetes-sleep> | <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/sleep-diabetes-and-obesity> | <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/diabetes-sleep> | <https://www.everydayhealth.com/hs/type-2-diabetes-care/sleep-better/> | <https://www.cuimc.columbia.edu/news/shortening-sleep-time-increases-diabetes-risk-women> | <https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/08/health/diabetes-sleep-problems-wellness/index.html> | <https://www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/dont-lose-sleep-over-diabetes> | <https://www.healthline.com/diabetesmine/sleeping-aids-and-diabetes#2>

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