



## Getting a Good Night's Sleep (Part 2)

(adapted from <http://www.helpguide.org>, [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org),  
<http://www.bettersleep.ca>, [www.css-scs.ca](http://www.css-scs.ca) and [www.heretohelp.bc.ca](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca))  
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*Editor's note: In the Spring issue of Focus, we discussed healthy sleep hygiene habits for getting a good night's sleep. In this issue, we'll look specifically at sleep assessment, nutrition, physical exercise and medication use as they pertain to our nightly sleep. This article is a collaborative submission by members of our health care team. Sources for the information provided are listed at the end of the article.*

### Sleep Assessment

To begin, how do we know if the sleep we're getting is sufficient, restful and restorative? If this question concerns you, try completing the **Epworth Sleepiness Scale (ESS)**. This questionnaire provides a measure of a person's general level of daytime sleepiness. The ESS is not a diagnostic tool itself, but is very useful for measuring one important aspect of the sleep-wake cycle, sleepiness. Here you go:

What is your chance of dozing or sleeping when:	no chance (0)	slight chance (1)	moderate chance (2)	high chance (3)
1. Sitting & reading				
2. Watching TV				
3. Sitting inactive in public				
4. Being a passenger in a car for 1 or more hours				
5. Lying down in the afternoon				
6. Sitting and talking to someone				
7. Sitting quietly at lunch (no alcohol)				
8. Stopped in traffic for a few minutes while driving				

If your score is 9 or above, please talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner about your sleepiness. Screening for Sleep Apnea may be warranted, particularly if other sleep disorder signs and symptoms are evident. These symptoms include: excessive daytime sleepiness that cannot be explained, snoring with pauses in breathing, high blood pressure, irritability, gasping or choking during sleep, fatigue, depression, lack of concentration, morning headaches, memory loss and impotence.

Any combination of the following factors may increase your risk of sleep apnea: obesity, large thick neck, family history of obstructive sleep apnea, male, over 40 years of age, a recessed chin, large tonsils or currently smoking.

23% of Canadian adults 18 years and older have sleep apnea, so it is important to discuss any sleep concerns with your health practitioner. Additional screening can be arranged.

What is the right amount of sleep per age category?

- Newborns (0-3 months): 14-17 hours
- Infants (4-11 months): 12-15 hours
- Toddlers (1-2 years): 11-14 hours
- Preschoolers (3-5 years): 10-13 hours
- School-aged children (6-13 years): 9-11 hours
- Teenagers (14-17 years): 8-10 hours
- Adults (18-64 years): 7-9 hours
- Older adults (65 years and older): 7-8 hours.

### Nutrition

For healthy adults, lack of sleep can affect caloric intake, meal times and weight status. This means, over time, we may see weight gain due to our lack of sleep. These changes can be seen after only five consecutive nights of poor sleep. Lack of sleep impacts our nutrition and weight by:

- Raising our hunger hormones and food cravings.
- Increasing how often we eat (longer waking hours means we need more food to fuel our brains).
- Limiting our physical activity because we have less overall energy.

The foods we eat during the day may also impact our sleep quality. There is growing evidence that diets high in processed foods (i.e. the 'western diet') may negatively affect our sleep-wake cycle and metabolism. So what can we do to promote sleep through our food choices?

- Aim to eat a variety of foods from all four food groups each day.
- Explore cooking from scratch by trying a new recipe, joining a cooking group or cooking with the family.
- Avoid eating a large meal right before going to bed.
- Limit caffeine and alcohol in the evenings.

### Physical Exercise

Exercise can promote or interfere with your sleep. How and when we exercise can influence sleep positively or



negatively. Adults should exercise at a moderate intensity for 150 minutes per week. At this intensity, your heart will beat faster and you will breathe faster, but you will not be so out of breath that you cannot say a full sentence. Moderate intensity activities include brisk walking, swimming and biking.

The time of day you exercise can affect sleep. Moderate intensity physical activity done in the morning or afternoon will improve your ability to fall asleep, sleep deeper and sleep longer. Gentle stretching or yoga prior to bed can promote relaxation of the body and mind and may let you fall asleep easier. Avoid strenuous or vigorous activity (where you work very hard and become out of breath) immediately prior to bed, as it may decrease your ability to fall asleep and stay asleep. Also, go outside. Exercising outdoors in the sunshine has the added benefit of helping regulate your sleep wake cycle.

Remember, the effect exercise has on sleep may not be immediate. Much like the effect exercise has on weight loss, improvement in sleep due to exercise will be gradual. It may take several weeks or months to fully reap the benefits.

### Medication Use\*

Many factors contribute to insomnia. Try to resolve underlying medical, psychiatric or environmental causes first (e.g. sleep apnea, heart failure, thyroid function, incontinence, restless legs syndrome, depression, anxiety, pain) and consider if your medication could be leading to insomnia.

alcohol	Diuretics	methylphenidate	quinidine
amantadine	Donepezil	modafinil	salbutamol
amphetamines	Fluoxetine	nicotine	salmeterol
aripiprazole	Flutamide	oral contraceptive	selegiline
atenolol	H2 blockers	paroxetine	senna
bupropion	ipratropium	phenylephrine	sertraline
caffeine	lamotrigine	phenytoin	terbutaline
clonidine	Levodopa	progesterone	theophylline
corticosteroids	medroxyprogesterone	propranolol	thyroid hormones
decongestants	methylodopa	pseudoephedrine	venlafaxine

### Tips to reduce drug associated insomnia:

- Certain medications should be taken in the morning – for example, diuretics or “water pills”, such as furosemide & hydrochlorothiazide, bupropion, steroids such as prednisone, stimulants, such as methylphenidate.
- Avoid excessive use of certain medications e.g. salbutamol inhaler, decongestants.
- Caffeine and nicotine should be avoided within 4-6 hours of sleep.

- Avoid alcohol within 4 hours of bedtime, as it causes fragmented sleep, especially in the second half of the night.

Sometimes medications must be used to treat insomnia, for example, if non-drug measures have been tried and poor sleep is negatively affecting daytime function.

### Tips for those that require a sedative:

- Only use sedatives in combination with non-drug measures.
- Ideally, only take sleeping pills for short periods of time (2-4 weeks). Try taking only a few nights per week, if possible.
- Always use the lowest effective dose.
- Be aware that sleeping pills can be “habit forming” and you may experience a few nights of poor sleep when you stop taking them.
- Be aware that certain sleeping pills may worsen the quality of your sleep over time.
- Always re-evaluate sedative use if you are taking them for long-term. If you are ready to stop, work on a tapering plan with your doctor or nurse practitioner.

Check with your pharmacist for specific tips related to your medications.

\*Adapted from: [www.RxFiles.ca](http://www.RxFiles.ca) Sleep/Sedatives: Overview

### Tips for Healthy Sleep

Remember:

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. (Yes, even on weekends!)
- Bask in bright light in the morning.
- Make sure your bedroom is conducive to sleep - dark, quiet and cool.
- Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillow.
- Don't go to bed feeling hungry but avoid a heavy meal right before bed.
- Develop a relaxing routine before bedtime.
- Reserve your bedroom for yourself and your partner, sleeping and intimacy only.
- Exercise regularly during the day.

Hopefully you will never suffer the consequences of a sleep disorder. If you are concerned about your sleep habits, please see any member of your health care team.

The information provided above is taken from the following websites:

epworthsleepinessscale.com  
todaysdietitian.com/newsarchives  
sleepfoundation.org  
foodandnutrition.org  
psychologytoday.com/blog/sleep-newzz  
sleep.org

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