Solid Strategies for Sound Slumber

If you’re setting aside seven to nine hours a night to sleep—congratulations! You’re doing one of the best things you can to give your entire body what it needs to restore and remain healthy. But even if you’re getting your seven to nine, are you truly getting the deep sleep your body needs? Believe it or not, there may be some simple (yet fixable) factors that may be causing you to miss out on the restorative sleep you need.

Here’s what may be getting in the way of restful sleep:

There’s too much light on. Light is one of the biggest external factors that can affect sleep. Exposure to light in the late evening tends to delay the phase of our internal clock and leads us to prefer later sleep times.

Try: Keeping your bedroom as dark as possible and avoid TV and electronics close to bedtime.

You don’t have a regular bedtime. Getting in sync with your body’s natural sleep and wake cycle (your circadian rhythm) is paramount for achieving good sleep. Going to bed and getting up at the same time each day will help you feel much more refreshed and energized than if you sleep the same number of hours at different times (i.e., going to bed very late and sleeping in one day, and then going to bed early and waking up early the next).

Try: Staying consistent, even on the weekends. If you want to change your bedtime, start with small increments, such as 15 minutes earlier or later each day—this will help your body adjust.

You’re worried when you fall asleep. Stress, worry, and anger from your day can make it very difficult to sleep well.

Try: Setting aside “worry time” before you go to bed. Write down the thoughts and feelings that are bugging you, and then make a promise to only revisit them until the next day.

You snore. Chronic snoring can affect the quantity and quality of your sleep.

Try: Exercising every day, and losing a little bit of weight if you’re overweight—even a little weight loss can reduce fatty tissue in the back of the throat and decrease or even stop snoring.

Should you seek sleep help?
If you’ve tried several sleep strategies and practice good “sleep hygiene” but still struggle with sleep problems, you may have a sleep disorder that requires professional treatment. Consider scheduling a visit with a health care professional if you regularly experience these symptoms:

» Persistent daytime sleepiness or fatigue
» Loud snoring and pauses in breathing
» Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
» Unrefreshing sleep
» Frequent morning headaches
» Physically acting out dreams during sleep
» Falling asleep at inappropriate times (i.e., at work, driving)

Source: WELCOA
When it comes to type 2 diabetes — the most common type of diabetes — prevention is a big deal. It’s especially important to make diabetes prevention a priority if you’re at increased risk of diabetes, such as if you’re overweight or you have a family history of the disease.

Diabetes prevention is as basic as eating more healthfully, becoming more physically active and losing a few extra pounds. Making a few simple changes in your lifestyle now may help you avoid the serious health complications down the road. Consider the latest diabetes prevention tips from the American Diabetes Association.

1. Get more physical activity.
Research shows that aerobic exercise and resistance training can help control diabetes by helping you lose weight, lowering your blood sugar, and boosting your sensitivity to insulin.

2. Get more fiber.
Eat more fruits, veggies, whole grains, and beans to lower your risk of heart disease and increase satiety.

3. Go for whole grains.
Whole grains may reduce your risk of diabetes and help maintain blood sugar levels. Many foods made from whole grains come ready to eat, including various breads, pasta products, and cereals.

4. Lose Extra Weight.
If you’re overweight, diabetes prevention may hinge on weight loss. Participants in one large study who lost a modest amount of weight — around 7 percent of initial body weight — and exercised regularly reduced the risk of developing diabetes by almost 60 percent.

5. Skip fad diets and just make healthier choices.
Low-carb diets or other fad diets may help you lose weight at first. But their effectiveness at preventing diabetes isn’t known, nor are their long-term effects. Instead, make variety and portion control part of your healthy-eating plan.

Source: Mayo Clinic

Healthy Cooking: Coconut Sweet Potato Lentil Soup w/ Rice

**Ingredients:**
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1/2 yellow onion, diced
- 1 inch fresh ginger, grated
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1 tbsp. yellow curry powder
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 3/4 cup dried lentils
- Kosher salt
- 1 can (14 oz.) coconut milk
- 2 cups baby spinach
- 2 cups cooked basmati rice
- 1/3 cup fresh cilantro, chopped

**Directions:**
1. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. When the oil shimmers, add the onion and cook for 5 minutes. Add the ginger, garlic, and sweet potatoes, and cook until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Stir in the curry powder and cayenne, and cook another minute.
2. Add the broth and lentils, and season with salt. Bring the mix to a boil, and then reduce to low. Cover and simmer 15-20 minutes, until the lentils are soft, and the sweet potatoes are tender.
3. Stir in the coconut milk and spinach, and cook 5 minutes. Remove from the heat, and add the cilantro.
4. To serve, divide the rice among bowls, and ladle the soup on top. Enjoy!
Fall into Wellness

Here are some changes you can make this fall to be more mindful about health and wellness.

- **Eating away from home:** Ask for a to-go box before you start eating. When you go out to eat, put half of your meal away to take home. Just like that, you will consume fewer calories and also save money on tomorrow’s lunch.

- **Grocery shopping:** Recognize that canned goods are generally less nutritious than fresh or frozen. Shop fresh and look for seasonal fruits and veggies. If you buy canned goods, always choose reduced-sodium varieties when available.

- **Mental health and stress:** Stop and take a deep breath. Find time for yourself. Even 10-15 minutes a day will make a big difference. Put your phone away, turn the TV office, go for a walk, or just sit down and relax. Find a new hobby or restore a new one that will help you take your mind off of the daily routine.

Thanksgiving Tips to Boost Mental Health and Wellness

**Give Thanks**
Gratitude is good for you. Research shows it can lower blood pressure, decrease depression and improve quality of life. “Gratitude works,” said Buturain Schneider, a gerontologist, theologian and mindful aging expert at USC.

But gratitude is not a feeling, it is a behavior we can practice every day of the year, she said. “You can strengthen an awareness of gratitude by sharing what you are thankful for or letting people know you appreciate them. Expressing this helps build bridges, connects us to the sacrifices of others and allows us to see abundance rather than what we lack.”

**Serve Up Strong Relationships**
Social isolation has recently been cited as possibly being more harmful to health than smoking or obesity. Despite the headaches of travel and stress that family dynamics can bring, Thanksgiving helps build community by encouraging shared experiences with family and friends, or even welcoming strangers.

“Until age 80, most people say they want to be healthy. After 80, people say what matters most is relationships,” Buturain Schneider said. “The Thanksgiving holiday is a powerful reminder of how coming together to share a meal can provide a sense of fellowship and belonging that many people, particularly older adults, are missing in their lives.”

**Extend a Helping Hand**
Many homeless shelters and retirement communities are inundated with individuals who sign up to serve meals on Thanksgiving. And like gratitude, research shows that helping others can bring health benefits to the giver. “We feel most alive when using our gifts and helping other people,” Buturain Schneider said. “The challenge is to make time in our lives to do this year-round so the recipients can express their own gratitude and get support on more than just one holiday.”

Source: University of Southern California
Karen’s Korner, Karen Hensley, UR Dietician: Tips for a Healthy Thanksgiving

We all know that Thanksgiving Day can be a hard day to eat healthy. Here are a few tips to help you make this day healthier.

1. Start your day off with exercise. Take a walk in morning and consider taking a neighborhood stroll after dinner.

2. Eat breakfast. Start your day off with a healthy breakfast such as oatmeal or a veggie omelet. Eating breakfast helps you from being ravenous going into Thanksgiving dinner. If your dinner is later in the day, don’t forget to eat lunch.

3. Pitch in. Offer to bring something to the dinner. This way you can make a dish that you know is healthy.

4. Position yourself away from the food. Don’t stand right in front of the appetizers or candy dish. Socialize away from the food.

5. Divide your plate well. Decide what food you’d like to eat and then fill your plate with ½ vegetables, ¼ protein, and ¼ starch.