

Top tips for a better sleep

Did you know that we spend up to one-third of our lives sleeping?

Sleep is a basic human need just like eating, drinking and breathing and without it our mental and physical wellbeing is at risk. Sleep is the time that our body repairs itself and when our brain consolidates our memories and processes information.



Benefits

Some of the few benefits of getting a good night's sleep are:

- Strengthen immune system
- Reduced stress levels
- Improved cognitive function
- Improved mood
- Reduce risk of accidents and safety incidents
- Lower risk for health concerns such as diabetes and heart disease



Good night's sleep

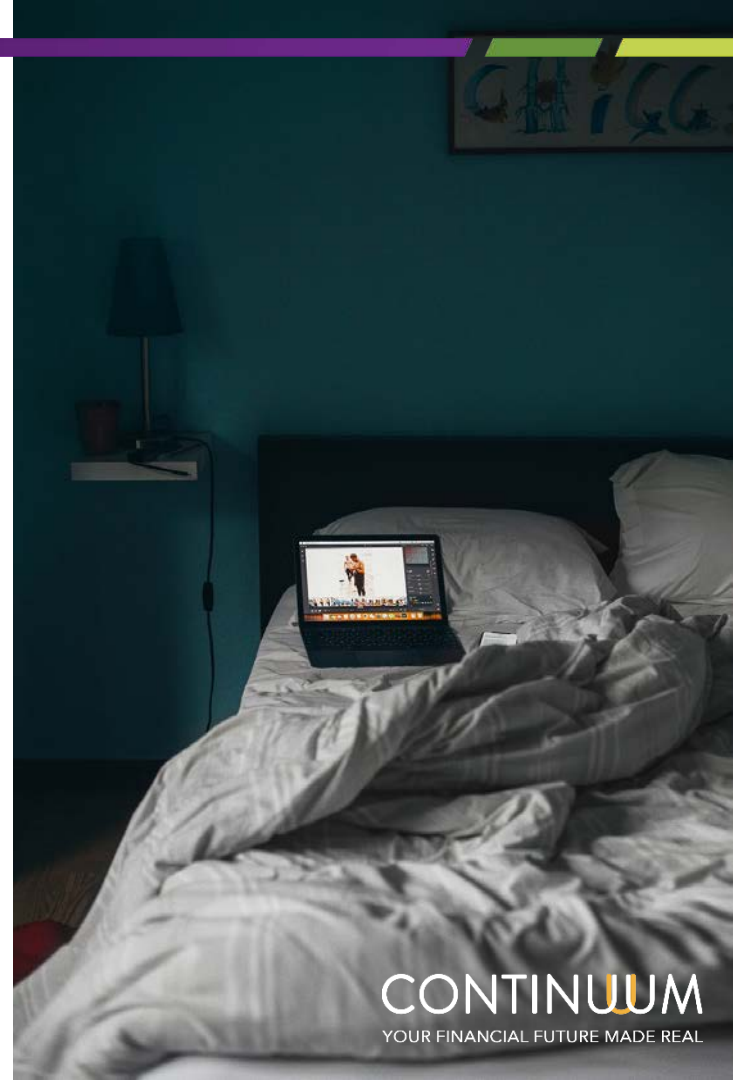
There are three elements to a good night's sleep:

1. **Duration:** adults on average should be getting around 8 hours per night
2. **Continuity:** Maintaining sleep throughout the night without disturbance
3. **Depth:** sleep should be deep enough to be restorative



Some helpful tips to help ensure you feel refreshed and rested when you wake:

- **Stick to a regular routine** – One of the best ways to improve and maintain a healthy sleeping pattern is to go to bed and get up at the same time each day. Try to keep up the routine even on the weekends and on days off
- **Only go to sleep when you feel like you need to** – Sleep when sleepy, instead of spending too much time lying awake in bed thinking that you can't get to sleep



Some helpful tips to help ensure you feel refreshed and rested when you wake:

- **Get up and reset** – If you have been lying awake for more than 20 minutes get out of bed and do something relaxing using minimal lighting e.g. read a chapter of a book, make a warm drink or listen to some quiet music or podcast (avoid anything too stimulating)
- **Don't clock watch** – Many people who have difficulties sleeping clock watch, which will cause restlessness and frustration which, in turn will awaken us. If you can, do not have a clock within easy reach



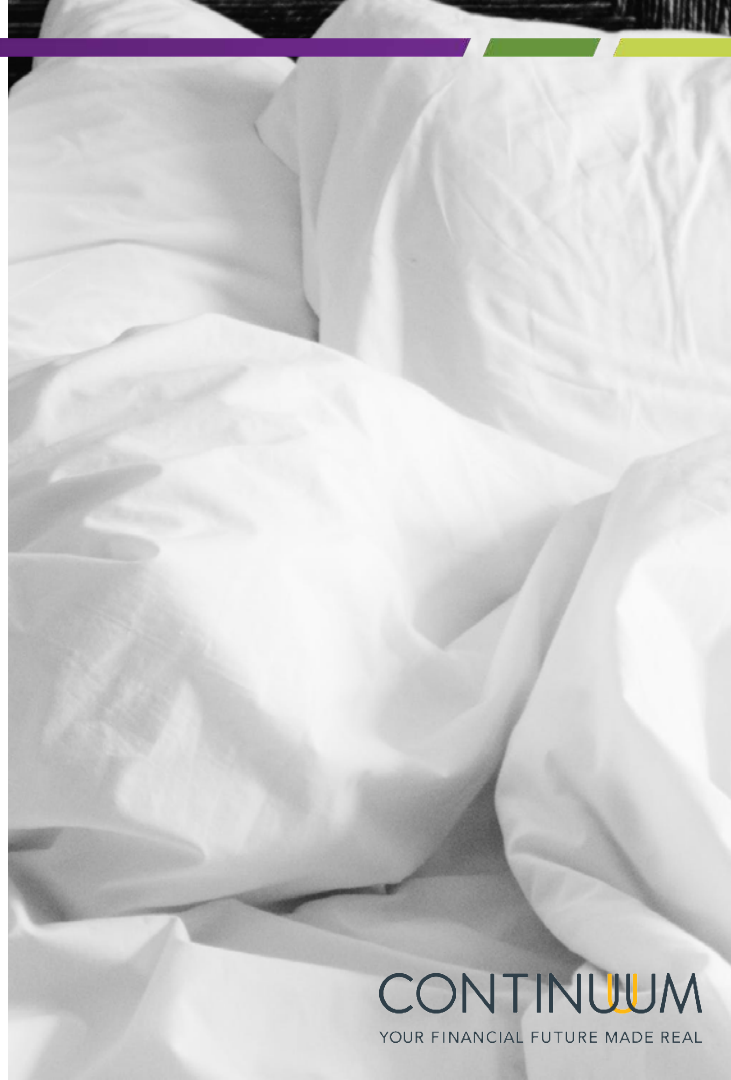
Some helpful tips to help ensure you feel refreshed and rested when you wake:

- **Avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, carbonated drinks and some medications) for at least 4-6 hours before going to sleep** – Caffeine is a stimulant and will interfere with our ability to fall asleep
- **Avoid nicotine (cigarettes) for at least 4-6 hours before going to sleep** – Like alcohol, these act as stimulants and will interfere with our ability to fall asleep
- **Avoid alcohol 4-6 hours prior to sleeping** – Despite the belief of alcohol being a relaxant; it may enable us to fall asleep quicker but it interrupt the quantity and quality of your sleep



Some helpful tips to help ensure you feel refreshed and rested when you wake:

- **Keep your bed for sleeping and sex only** – Try not to use it for anything else, for example your office, eating or watching TV as your body will quickly lose the connection between the bedroom being a place to sleep
- **Try to avoid napping during the day** – Napping during the day can lead to us feeling less tired at our normal sleep time. If you do feel the need to nap during the day make sure this is only once during the day for less than one hour; the nap should be taken prior to 3pm



Some helpful tips to help ensure you feel refreshed and rested when you wake:

- **Take a relaxing bath** – Having a hot bath 1-2 hour prior to going to sleep will help raise your body temperature, causing you to feel sleepy as your body temperature drops again. Sleepiness has been associated with a drop in body temperature
- **Use a sleep diary** – If you are having persistent issues with sleep, keeping a diary can be a useful way of tracking the amount of sleep you get each night (quantity) and also the quality. It is wise to only use it for 2 weeks to get a rough idea of your sleeping habits, then again 2 months later to see if you've made progress or if anything has changed



Some helpful tips to help ensure you feel refreshed and rested when you wake:

- **Environment** – It is very important that your bedroom (and bed) is quiet and comfortable for sleeping. If your room is cool, use a warm blanket. Make sure your blinds/curtains are sufficient to block out the early morning light and even consider earplugs if there is noise outside of your room
- **Exercise** – Regular exercise helps with healthy sleeping patterns, however strenuous exercise is not advised 4 hours before bedtime
- **Eat a healthy, balanced diet** – Timing is key, if you want to eat before bedtime have a light snack a heavy meal soon before bed can disrupt your sleep



Some helpful tips to help ensure you feel refreshed and rested when you wake:

- **Herbal tea** – Try a calming night time tea before bed, instead of a caffeinated product. Calming herbs, such as chamomile help to relax the nervous system and therefore helping to promote a restful night sleep
- **Avoid devices that emit blue light before sleep** – Devices with a digital screen, electronic devices and fluorescent lighting emit blue light. Blue light can suppress the body's release of melatonin, a hormone that helps regulate sleep. Try switching to 'night mode' or a suitable alternative which changes the blue light to yellow



