Sleep is essential to any healthy lifestyle; it plays a critical role in immune function, metabolism, memory, learning, and other vital functions, along with disease prevention and weight management. It is your bodies opportunity to repair itself. Below are some tips to help ensure that your environment and habits are conducive to getting the sleep you need.

Sleep Health Tips:

1. Reduce Blue Light Exposure in the Evening
Exposure to light during the day is beneficial, but nighttime light exposure has the opposite effect. Again, this is due to its impact on your circadian rhythm, tricking your brain into thinking it is still daytime. This reduces hormones like melatonin, which help you relax and get deep sleep.
Blue light — which electronic devices like smartphones and computers emit in large amounts — is the worst in this regard.

There are several popular methods you can use to reduce nighttime blue light exposure:
-Wear glasses that block blue light.
-Download an app such as f.lux to block blue light on your laptop or computer.
-Install an app that blocks blue light on your smartphone. These are available for both iPhones and Android models.
-Stop watching TV and turn off any bright lights two hours before heading to bed

https://justgetflux.com/

2. Relax and Clear Your Mind in the Evening
Many people have a pre-sleep routine that helps them relax.
Relaxation techniques before bed have been shown to improve sleep quality and are another common technique used to treat insomnia, a relaxing massage improveS sleep quality. Strategies include listening to relaxing music, reading a book, taking a hot bath, meditating, deep breathing and yoga stretches. A relaxing bath or shower is another popular way to sleep better. Alternatively, if you don't want to take a full bath at night, simply bathing your feet in hot water can help you relax and improve sleep.

Top apps to aid in sleep:
https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/10-calming-apps-destress-clear-mind/

3. Don't Consume Caffeine Late in the Day
Caffeine has numerous benefits and is consumed by 90% of the US population. A single dose can enhance focus, energy and sports performance. However, when consumed late in the day, coffee stimulates your nervous system and may stop your body from naturally relaxing at night. In one study, consuming caffeine up to six hours before bed significantly worsened sleep quality. Caffeine can stay elevated in your blood for 6–8 hours. Therefore, drinking large amounts of coffee after 3–4 p.m. is not recommended — especially if you are sensitive to caffeine or have trouble sleeping. Try choosing an herbal tea, warm milk with spices, or club soda with lime or lemon for a bedtime beverage.

https://www.theproducemoms.com/2019/03/07/sleepytime-golden-milk/

4. Try to Sleep and Wake at Consistent Times
Your body's circadian rhythm functions on a set loop, aligning itself with sunrise and sunset. Being consistent with your sleep and waking times can aid long-term sleep quality. Studies of people who had irregular sleeping patterns and went to bed late on the weekends reported poor sleep. Other studies have highlighted that irregular sleep patterns can alter your circadian rhythm and levels of melatonin, which signal your brain to sleep.

If you struggle with sleep, try to get in the habit of waking up and going to bed at similar times. After several weeks, you may not even need an alarm.

5. Take a Melatonin Supplement
Melatonin is a key sleep hormone that tells your brain when it's time to relax and head to bed. Melatonin supplements are an extremely popular sleep aid. Often used to treat insomnia, melatonin may be one of the easiest ways to fall asleep faster. In one study, 2 mg of melatonin before bed improved sleep quality and energy the next day and helped people fall asleep faster, no withdrawal effects have been found in its use. Melatonin is also useful when traveling and adjusting to a new time zone, as it helps your body's circadian rhythm return to normal. It is widely available in stores or online.

Take around 1–5 mg 30–60 minutes before bed. Start with a low dose to assess your tolerance, and then increase it slowly as needed. Since melatonin may alter brain chemistry, it is advised that you check with a medical professional before use.

You should also speak with a healthcare provider if you're thinking about using melatonin as a sleep aid.

6. Consider These Other Supplements
Several supplements can induce relaxation and help you sleep, including:

- Valerian root: Several studies suggest that valerian can help you fall asleep and improve sleep quality.
- Magnesium: Responsible for over 600 reactions within your body, magnesium can improve relaxation and enhance sleep quality.
- L-theanine: An amino acid, l-theanine can improve relaxation and sleep. .
- Lavender: A powerful herb with many health benefits, lavender can induce a calming and sedentary effect to improve sleep.

You should also speak with a healthcare provider if you're thinking about using any sleep aids.

8. Alcohol Use
Having more than 1 drink at night can negatively affect your sleep and hormones. Alcohol is known to cause or increase the symptoms of sleep apnea, snoring and disrupted sleep patterns. It also alters nighttime melatonin production, which plays a key role in your body's circadian rhythm. Alcohol consumption at night decreased the natural nighttime elevations in human growth hormone (HGH), which plays a role in your circadian rhythm and has many other key functions.

Limit your alcohol content a couple hours before you go to bed.

9. Optimize Your Bedroom Environment
Many people believe that the bedroom environment and its setup are key factors in getting a good night's sleep. These factors include temperature, noise, external lights and furniture arrangement .

To optimize your bedroom environment, try to minimize external noise, light and artificial lights from devices like alarm clocks. Make sure your bedroom is a quiet, relaxing, clean and enjoyable place, and the temperature is not too warm or chilly.

10. Don't Eat Late in the Evening
Late-night eating may negatively impact both sleep quality and the natural release of HGH and melatonin. This is a time for your body to rest and recover from your day, so if it is focusing on digestion it takes away from other processes. Also some foods can have a stimulatory effect and not be conducive to quality sleep.

11. Exercise Regularly — But Typically Not Before Bed
Exercise is one of the best science-backed ways to improve your sleep and health.

It can enhance all aspects of sleep and has been used to reduce symptoms of insomnia. Although daily exercise is key for a good night's sleep, performing it too late in the day may cause sleep problems. This is due to the stimulatory effect of exercise, which increases alertness and hormones like epinephrine and adrenaline. However, some people report no detrimental effects, so it clearly depends on the individual.

Here is a really good link to some information from OHSU, who did a sleep study on our unit last year.

https://www.ohsu.edu/brain-institute/getting-good-nights-sleep-faq-and-resources

How much sleep do I need?

Most adults need 7 to 8 hours of good quality sleep on a regular schedule each night. Make changes to your routine if you can't find enough time to sleep.

Getting enough sleep isn't only about total hours of sleep. It's also important to get good quality sleep on a regular schedule so you feel rested when you wake up.

If you often have trouble sleeping – or if you often still feel tired after sleeping – talk with your doctor.

How much sleep do children need?
Kids need even more sleep than adults.

Teens need 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night.
School-aged children need 9 to 12 hours of sleep each night.
Preschoolers need to sleep between 10 and 13 hours a day (including naps).
Toddlers need to sleep between 11 and 14 hours a day (including naps).
Babies need to sleep between 12 and 16 hours a day (including naps).