

Good night time and daytime habits can keep you well-rested

Many underlying health problems such as [chronic pain](#), sleep apnea or [acid reflux](#) can cause insomnia. But if your difficulty in sleeping is not due to health problems, here are some tips that can help you get back to sleep.

1. **Stop watching the clock.** Marking off the minutes only heightens your distress about being awake.
2. **Try relaxing your body to fall asleep.** Working from your toes to your forehead, tightly tense each muscle group for five seconds, then relax.
3. **If you can't fall back to sleep within 20 minutes, get out of bed.** Use your "mind clock," Dr. Walla says, to estimate how long you've been awake. After 20 minutes of wakefulness, get up and leave your bedroom. "Don't spend time in bed trying to fall asleep," she says. "You probably will

start worrying about falling asleep and then learn to associate the bedroom with not sleeping well."

4. **Find an uninteresting activity.** Read something uninteresting. Listen to relaxing music. When you start to feel drowsy, go back to bed.

You also can adopt [daytime habits](#) that will help you sleep better at night, Dr. Walla says.

- **Create a consistent sleeping and waking schedule — even on the weekends and days off work.** "What works best is going to bed at the [same time](#) and waking up at same time every day," Dr. Walla says.
- **Avoid consuming drinks or food with caffeine before bedtime.** Abstain from caffeine for at least five to six hours before you plan to retire, Dr. Walla says. "Caffeine can play a major role in getting a good night's sleep," she says.
- **Make your sleeping environment comfortable.** The room should have a temperature that is not too warm or too cold. Find a [mattress](#) and pillow with a firmness level that you find restful.
- **One hour before bedtime, stop doing work or other mentally challenging tasks.** Switch to something calming such as reading a book.
- **Use your bed only for sleep or intimacy.** Do not watch television or play with [electronic devices](#) while lying in bed. "Otherwise, we come to associate the bedroom with not sleeping," Dr. Walla says.

Chronic insomnia affects up to 20 percent of adults. Many adults don't seek [treatment](#) for it.

It's time to seek medical advice if you experience symptoms that last longer than a month or so. Ditto if lack of sleep interferes with your daytime activities, Dr. Walla says.