# How to Get Great Sleep While You're Stuck At Home

Here are a few tips on how to get great sleep, even as we collectively deal with the coronavirus pandemic.

April 19, 2020 By Michael Breus, PhD

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If I had one thing to tell everyone while stuck at home due to the coronavirus, it would be this: don't let your new, abnormal schedule ruin your sleep.

Of course, that's easier said than done right now. With millions of Americans suddenly finding themselves either working from home or looking for a new job during this downturn, our lives are very different at the beginning of April compared to the beginning of March.

Right now, about 9 out of 10 Americans are living under a stay-at-home order from their state or local government. Add in the fact that the news is constantly focused on the latest COVID-19 developments, and it's easy to see why people are stressed out.

Another problem is there's simply less to do currently, and people are looking to fill that void with less-than-ideal health choices. Alcohol consumption has increased more than 50%, weed sales have soared, time spent streaming TV has spiked, and, with gyms shut down, people are exercising less. Keeping that in mind, it's imperative we don't let our sleep patterns take a hit as well.

Good sleep helps regulate mood, increases productivity, and gives our immune systems a much-needed boost. (And speaking of immunity, I'm a huge fan of Pique Tea crystals. They're antioxidant-infused, which helps support immune function, and they taste great. That's a great combo to me.) If we're going to be stuck at home, we might as well make sure we're well-rested. It'll pay dividends once we're back to something resembling normal day-to-day life.

Here are a few tips on how to get great sleep, even as we collectively deal with the coronavirus pandemic.

## Stick to Your Sleep Schedule

This one might seem obvious, but it can be tough to pull off when things go sideways.

If possible, you want to keep your sleep schedule as close to normal as you can while working from

home. Yes, since you're not having to budget time for driving into the office or squeezing in your post-work workout, it can be tempting to give yourself some leeway. But don't go overboard.

Keeping a consistent sleep schedule — meaning falling asleep within the same 30 minute window most nights — helps your body fight common health problems including high blood pressure, anxiety, and cardiovascular disease. Also, avoid the urge to take either a long nap or several smaller naps during the day. I'm pro-nap, but anything past 90 minutes long — and later than 4:00 p.m. — threatens to derail your sleep schedule.

If you need assistance targeting an ideal time to go to sleep and wake up, make sure you use my sleep calculator. And remember, everyone's biological clock runs at its own pace. To determine the best time for you to rest, eat and exercise, it's important to know your chronotype. If you don't know it, that's alright, just take our easy quiz to find out your chronotype in minutes.

Expose yourself to Natural Light

Making sure you get some natural light, especially in the morning, is a big deal.

Sunlight is an important regulator when it comes to the body's natural sleep-wake cycle. By exposing ourselves to 10 minute of natural light in the morning, it alerts our bodies it's time to wake up. One way it does this is by curtailing the production of melatonin, a key hormone that fosters sleep.

At the same time, natural light helps you sleep better at night. How does that work? Well, sunlight increases production of serotonin, which is an important hormone when it comes to regulating sleep and mood. And because serotonin is also a precursor to melatonin, sunlight helps our bodies prepare hours in advance for quality sleep by kicking off the natural production of melatonin.

Exercise

Admittedly, it's a little tougher to workout right now. Gyms are closed and countless parks and adult sports leagues have been temporarily shut down. That just means we all have to work a little harder—and get a little creative—to make sure our physical fitness doesn't fall by the wayside.

It goes beyond staying in shape, too. Research shows exercise increases the time we spend in deep sleep. This is the most physically restorative sleep phase, helping to improve immune function and support heart health; it also helps regulate stress, which is one of the more common problems that blocks people from falling asleep quickly. Another benefit: your sleep duration increases when you routinely workout.

You don't need to set aside a ton of time, either. Multiple studies have shown 150 minutes a week—or about 30 minutes of exercise, 5 days a week—is enough for healthy adults. You can read more about the benefits of exercising when it comes to sleep if you'd like to learn more.

Also, consider cleaning up your diet using the Fasting Mimicking Diet. I am a real fan of the ProLon FMD meal program because it was developed at the University of Southern California, at their

Longevity Center, where they researched fasting and nutrition for over 20 years and came up with a scientific method that allows your body to fast, while still eating real food. Use code PROLON50 to take $50 off your program.

## Limit Stress

As I mentioned a little earlier, stress is a sleep killer.

Stress not only keeps the mind racing, which can get in the way of falling asleep, but it also triggers the release of several hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol. This activates your "fight or flight" response system and raises your blood pressure and heart rate; it can also lead to sleep disorders like insomnia.

That's the last thing you need right now. To reduce stress, here are two tips that come to mind while dealing with the pandemic:

Set clear work boundaries: The line between work and home life is more blurred than ever. While working from home, many people are struggling to find a moment where they're not inundated with emails and other work notifications. That's why it's imperative to make sure you set clear boundaries when it comes to work and personal time; if you normally leave the office at 6:00 p.m., make that your cut-off time for working from home. Also, avoid working from bed if you can. Keeping your bedroom reserved for sleeping is important from a mental standpoint.

Avoid constantly checking the news: If you're like me, you're probably spending a lot of time looking up the latest coronavirus news. Thanks to social media and the internet, you can easily find yourself going down a rabbit hole within a few minutes. But that's not necessarily good for our stress levels. A few years ago, The American Psychological Association found two-thirds of Americans are anxious about the state of the country—and the 24/7 news cycle plays a big role in increasing stress levels. Staying informed is great, but make sure you don't overload on stressful news stories—especially within an hour of going to sleep. Use that time to read, meditate or journal instead.

## When It Comes to Your Bedroom, Comfort Is Key

Your bedroom should be an oasis—an escape from the pressure of day-to-day life. And with everything that's going on in the world, that's more true than ever.

To make sure you're getting the best sleep possible right now, start by reviewing your foundation: your mattress, your pillow, and even your curtains. The goal is to give yourself a comfortable, cool, dark and quiet place to sleep. And with the weather heating up a bit, it's a great time to look at sleep systems like Chilipad, which allow you to control your body heat in bed.

You've probably heard me say it before: sleep is a performance activity. Whether it's climbing a mountain, running a marathon, or laying down at night, you want to make sure you have the equipment necessary to get the job done. Having a bedroom setup that fosters good sleep, rather than getting in the way of it, is essential.

Hopefully, with these five tips in mind, you'll be able to steer clear of any sleep problems while under stay-at-home orders. Thank you for reading, stay safe, and we'll be back with more next week!

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