

**A COMMONHEALTH "HOW TO" BOOKLET
TO HELP YOU SLEEP**



Better Nights Ahead

FROM THE OFFICE OF WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT

Sleep...we need it!



Lots of us look at sleep as a luxury.

It's something that other people get to do.

But us? We are far too busy and who's got time to be unproductive like that!?!

WE ALL DO!

Rest is greatly beneficial and absolutely productive, so it is up to us to make it a priority.

Sleep and immunity

The immune system is on everyone's mind, and for good reason. Exercise and a healthy diet boost our body's defense system, and sleep has been shown to impact T cell functioning - a critical factor in immunity. Higher levels of stress hormones may harm T cells, but stress hormones dip while we sleep which gives us a break and allows the T cells to work.

Sleep and the mind

Sleep optimizes how your brain works. There are studies that show sleep helps to regulate emotions and mood. Sleep is also essential for attention, concentration and executive function, which helps us make good judgments, remain flexible and be creative.



Sleep and the body

Exercise and sleep both combat stress and can bolster health and mood. Scientists have studied the connection between physical activity and sleep and found that most regular exercisers reported better, more sound sleep than non-exercisers.

Quiz yourself on your sleep knowledge on the next page.



TEST YOUR SLEEP SENSE

CHOOSE TRUE OR FALSE

1.

You can get by on 4 hours of sleep.

TRUE or FALSE

2.

Drinking alcohol will help you sleep better.

TRUE or FALSE

3.

A short daytime nap can be good for you.

TRUE or FALSE

4.

Showing up to work with a sleep deficit is like arriving drunk.

TRUE or FALSE

5.

Exercising before bed
is never a good idea.

TRUE or FALSE

6.

Counting sheep
doesn't really work.

TRUE or FALSE

7.

A coffee break after
lunch can keep you
awake at night.

TRUE or FALSE

8.

You can catch up on
sleep on the
weekend.

TRUE or FALSE

9.

Screen time in bed is
okay as long as you
are relaxed.

TRUE or FALSE

10.

Tossing and turning
will eventually lead to
sleep.

TRUE or FALSE

HOW TO:

LEVEL UP YOUR SLEEP KNOWLEDGE

1. “You can get by with only 4 hours of sleep.”

False. For most of us, 7-8 hours is the “sweet spot” for sleep—and makes a huge difference in our alertness, moods, productivity, and overall wellbeing.

2. “Drinking alcohol will help you sleep better.”

False. While a drink or two may help you fall asleep quickly, alcohol often leads to lighter, less restorative sleep and increased wakefulness during the night.

3. “Short daytime naps could be a fantastic idea.”

True. If they’re possible in your routine, naps are a great way to re-energize and improve performance in the workplace. Try to keep the naps under 20 minutes or they may interfere with nighttime sleep.

4. “Showing up at work with a sleep deficit is like arriving drunk.”

True. Studies have shown that having too few hours of sleep produces the same alertness deficit as being legally drunk.

5. “Exercising before bed is never a good idea.”

False. As long as you allow proper opportunity to wind down afterward, your workout can be scheduled before bed as “better late than never.”

6. “Counting sheep doesn’t really work.”

True. Studies show that counting sheep doesn’t seem to be very effective at inducing sleep. What’s suggested instead is to visualize a calm, lovely scene, like a beach, to wind down.

7. “An afternoon coffee break can keep you up at night.”

True. Caffeine can remain in your body for 6-8 hours or longer after you consume it. This can certainly have an effect on your sleep later.

8. “You can catch up on your sleep over the weekend.”

False. This actually makes getting to sleep on time Sunday night more difficult. Instead, stick to a routine to ensure regular, restful sleep.

9. “Screen time is okay as long as you are relaxed.”

False. Screen time is never beneficial before bed because of the flickering blue light it projects. Turn off your devices an hour before bed, ideally, and keep the room free of light and screens.

10. “Tossing and turning will eventually lead to sleep.”

False. Tossing and turning is an anxiety-ridden activity that will not be helpful for rest. Studies show that getting out of bed after 20 minutes of restlessness is the way to go.

Give yourself a point for each correct answer

10 points = Sweet Dreamer

8-9 points = Solid Sleeper

6-7 points = Light Snoozer

5 or less = Needs a Nap!

HOW TO:

SPRING FOR A NEW MATTRESS

Mattresses typically last 5-10 years

Shop online sales to get the best deals on the brand and styles you like

Look for a hybrid that combines an innerspring core with memory foam

Check the return policy - many companies offer a 90 day trial period

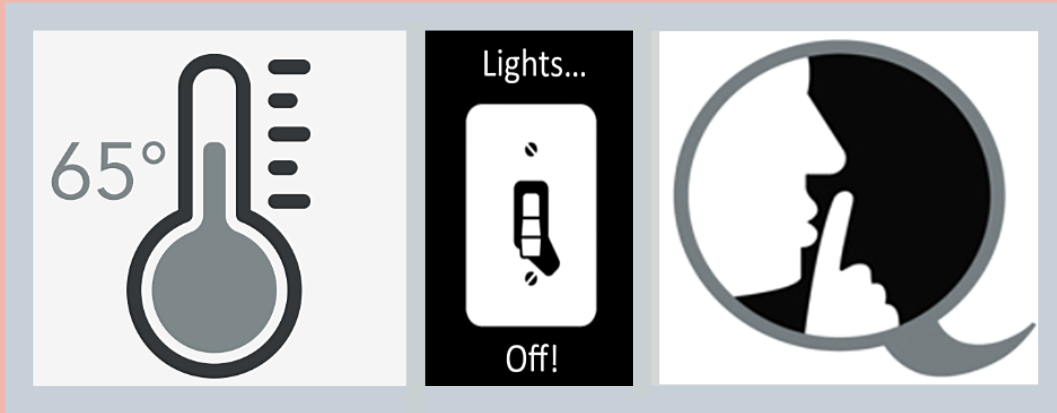
Replace your mattress when you feel sore, it feels lumpy, or you sleep better elsewhere

Use a mattress protector to keep out dust, allergens, and spills

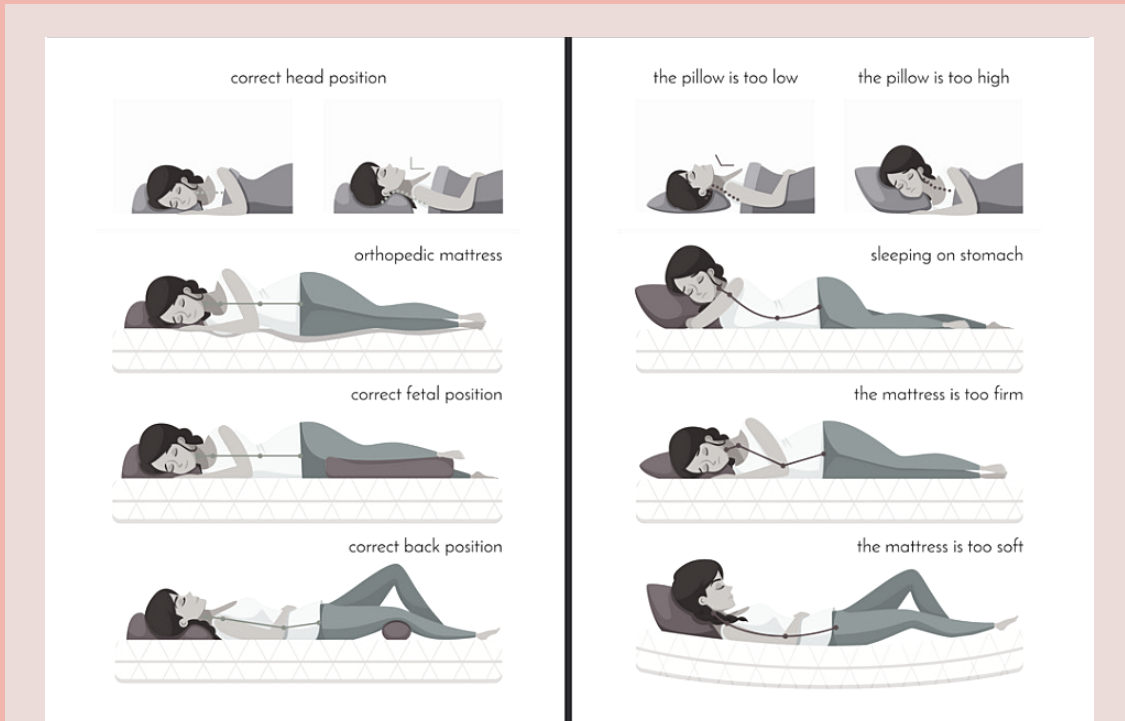


BEDROOM BEST PRACTICES

COOL DARK QUIET



The power of the proper pillow and mattress combo





HOW TO:

SETTLE DOWN FOR REST

If you find yourself spending more time trying to fall asleep than actually sleeping, try these methods to help reset your sleep cues.

T H E B A S I C S

Relax your entire face
(even the muscles inside your mouth)

Drop your shoulders and release your arm
muscles down through your hands

Deeply inhale

Exhale and relax your chest in all directions

Inhale

Exhale and release your hips and legs all the way
through the soles of the feet

Continue your inhalation and exhalation while
you imagine how you feel in a relaxing setting

4 - 7 - 8 B R E A T H I N G

Get ready by placing your tongue on the roof of your mouth, just behind your front teeth

- Exhale with your lips slightly open
- Close your mouth and inhale through your nose as you count to 4
- Gently hold your breath for a count of 7
- Exhale gently for a count of 8
- Complete this cycle four times (or less if you fall asleep!)

P . M . R .

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

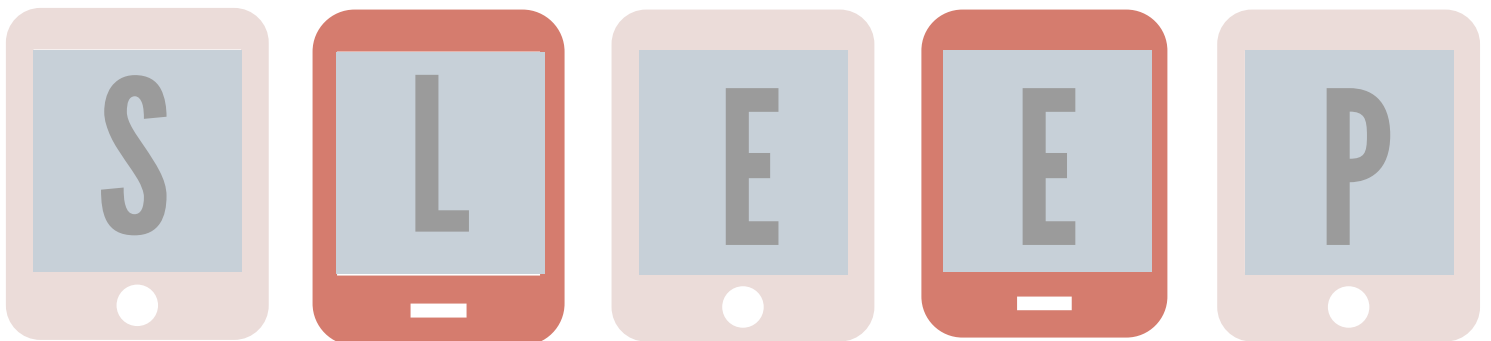
- Raise your eyebrows for 5 seconds
- Relax and chill for 10 seconds
- Smile huge for 5 seconds
- Let it go and release your cheeks for 10 seconds
- Stretch your chin upwards for 5 seconds
- Let your head go heavy into the pillow for 10 seconds
- Continue to tense (but not strain) and deeply relax your way down your body
- Let yourself drift off, even if you don't make it all the way to your feet



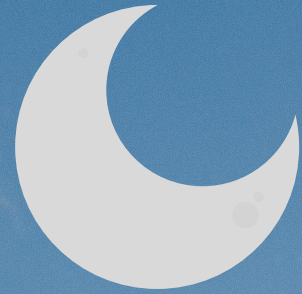
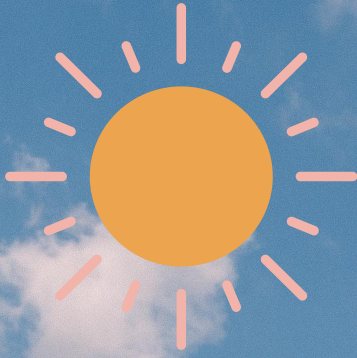
HOW TO:

RESTORE YOUR CIRCADIAN RHYTHM

Many of us have seen an uptick in the use of devices in our daily lives, and this use often extends well into the evening hours. This means we are exposed to a lot more blue light after dark than just a generation or two ago when the sun was our primary source. This wave length of light suppresses the production of a very important sleep hormone, melatonin. This is why the sun wakes us in the morning and we feel sleepier in dark environments. The blue light from our screens can signal to our brains that it's time to be awake when we'd rather be sleeping. Blue light can be beneficial for establishing a healthy circadian rhythm though, if we minimize our blue light exposure from screens after dark.



Get your screen life in balance



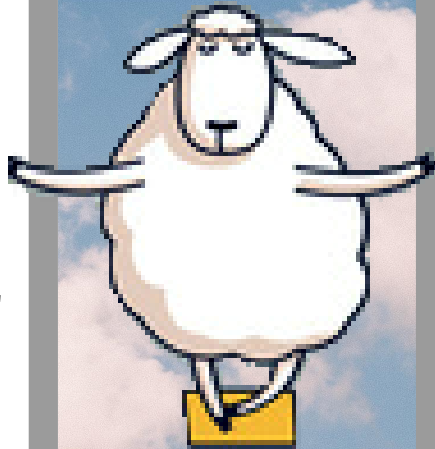
Things to do in **Daylight**

**Get more
sunshine**

Use a light box

**Wear blue
blocking eye wear**

**Take frequent
breaks to reduce
eye strain**



Things to do in **Moonlight**

**Turn devices off
well before
bedtime**

**Adjust screen
brightness**

**Use a night light
filter**

**Dim overhead
lights after dark**

Blue light and kids

Pick a time at or before sunset to cut off screen use. When kids use devices long into the evening, it keeps them wired when they should be yawning. Turn screens off to optimize your kid's sleep.

HOW TO:

TAKE THE PERFECT POWER NAP

Many of us fight the urge to lie down every day at 2 pm.

Perhaps we shouldn't.

Napping is natural. It's also good for you. A short nap, research shows, can produce all sorts of benefits, from increased alertness to improved memory.

- **Take advantage of the afternoon slump, when your body is already primed to fall asleep.**
- **Don't sleep at your desk. It takes about twice as long to fall asleep sitting upright versus lying down.**
- **Use earplugs or a sleep mask to block out extra light and noise.**
- **Meditate and relax. Take slow, deep breaths.**
- **Don't sleep for longer than 20 minutes. Set an alarm.**

How to take a coffee nap

The Coffee Nap is simple: you drink a cup of coffee and immediately take a 15 minute nap. Researchers found coffee helps clear your system of adenosine, a chemical which makes you sleepy. The combination of a cup of coffee with an immediate nap chaser provided the most alertness for the longest period of time in tests. The recommendation for a coffee nap is a bit shorter than a power nap – 15 minutes vs 20 minutes.



HOW TO:

RECOVER AFTER A ROUGH NIGHT'S SLEEP

Sleepless nights happen to the best of us. When you don't get enough sleep, your brain doesn't function at optimal speed and the areas responsible for higher level thought processes like working memory aren't at their best. It's also likely to make you more irritable and prone to mood swings. We've all been there.

5 TIPS TO TRY

Sit by a window or go outside

Eat a balanced meal

Stay active

Don't overdo the caffeine

Simplify your day to avoid big decisions



Nature can be a powerful cue, so if you are feeling groggy, get some sunlight and fresh air. Keeping up with the basics, like balanced meals and enough activity (even when you feel like you don't have any energy to spare), can help keep your body happy enough to mitigate some of the effects of sleep deprivation. This will only work for so long, so be sure to address any underlying sleep conditions with your doctor if sleepless nights are a regular thing for you.



STRETCH

Getting to bed a little early can help, but try to get back to your normal bedtime.

RESIST SUGAR

If you can take a nap, keep it brief—under 20 minutes will refresh without making it harder to fall asleep at night.



If you're exhausted but still having trouble falling asleep, count backwards from 300 in multiples of three.

ENERGY SAVING MODE

TAKE BREAKS

The maximum amount of recovery sleep that you can get is 10 hours, so don't sleep all day!

SIMPLIFY

HOW TO:

THRIVE WORKING OUTSIDE THE 9 TO 5

Approximately two in every five workers in the U.S work during nonstandard times – defined as evenings, nights, rotating shifts, or weekends.


Try these tips if that's you!

Simulate day by using bright lights on shift

Spread out small servings of caffeine until 6-8 hours before rest

Protect your sleep by leaving your devices outside of the bedroom

Simulate night by using dark curtains during rest



Avoid bright lights and
sun on your drive home -
wear sunglasses

If possible, run errands
before work

Skip the alcohol and
smoking before bed

Eat a light balanced
meal before sleep

Dedicate a time for
exercise after rest

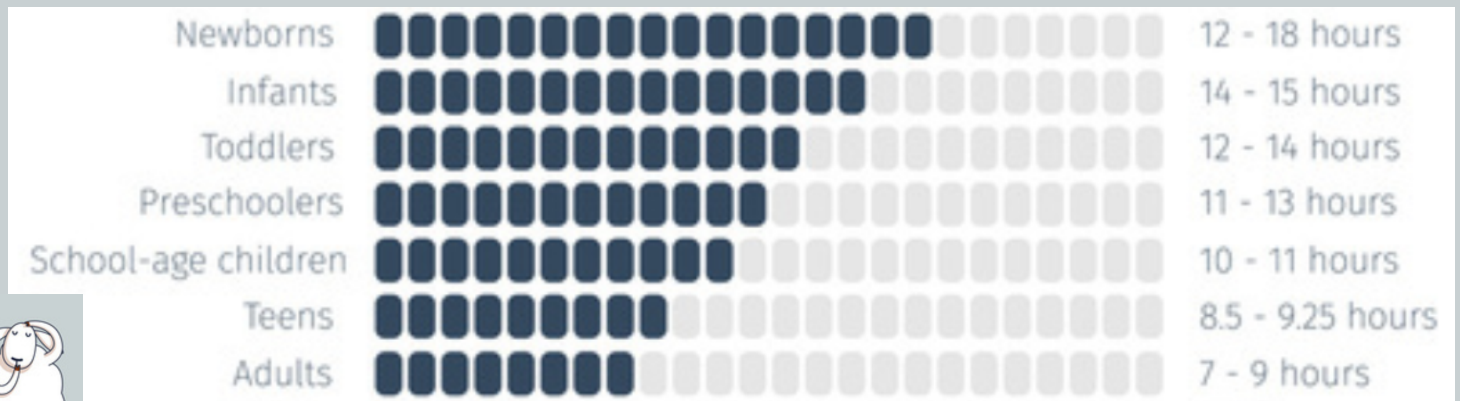
Stick to the schedule you set for
eating, exercising, & sleeping

Create a
bedtime routine

HOW TO:

FIGURE OUT IF YOU MIGHT HAVE A SLEEP ISSUE

Sometimes we all lose sleep for one reason or another, but if you are spending enough time in bed and still wake up tired, you may want to have a talk with your doctor.



There's a sleep diary in the pages ahead that can help you spot patterns in your sleep. Answer yes or no to the following list of questions to get an idea about some common sleep disorder symptoms:

1. Does it regularly take you more than 30 minutes to fall asleep?
2. Do you snore?
3. Are you tired during the day?
4. Do fall asleep at inappropriate times?
5. Do you ever wake up gasping or choking?
6. Do you get morning headaches?
7. Do you need frequent naps?
8. Do you wake up repeatedly throughout the night?
9. Do you feel a prickling or tingling sensation in your limbs?
10. Do you awaken too early in the morning?

Any yes on the list scores you a talk with a doc

**COVA Care, COVA HDHP, TLC
Key Advantage & TLC HDHP**

Anthem EAP Member Access:
855-223-9277

www.anthemeap.com

Log In: Commonwealth of Virginia
Search "sleep" in the tool bar and
you'll find articles, seminars, a quiz,
slideshows, videos & more.

Also, check out myStrength, The
health club for your mind™ for help
with your sleep goals.

COVA HealthAware

Resources for Living EAP
1-888-238-6232

www.mylifevalues.com

Username & Password: COVA

Available by app or online, the
Resources for Living EAP has articles,
videos, and webinars on a wide array
of sleep topics. Members have access
to myStrength™ plus Lifestyle and
Condition Group Coaching.

SLEEP & YOUR BENEFITS

Optima Health Plan

Start by visiting
[www.optimahealth.com/members/
health-and-wellness/health-
resources/](http://www.optimahealth.com/members/health-and-wellness/health-resources/) to use a single sign on to
access the WebMD wellness page.

There you'll find educational
resources and other information
provided by WebMD. You can also
enjoy a digital lunch and learn video
series on sleep and heart health.

Kaiser Permanente (KP)

Kaiser Permanente offers all of their
resources on sleeping better including
guided meditations, self-assessments,
videos, quizzes, and more free to
anyone on their website.

Just visit healthy.kaiserpermanente.org
and then choose Health & Wellness >
Mental health > Wellness resources >
Sleep to try their tools.

HOW TO:

USE A SLEEP JOURNAL

Record the details of your sleep each day. It only takes a few minutes and you may be surprised by what patterns emerge. Think about changing one habit at a time for better nights ahead!

Week 1

COMPLETE IN THE MORNING

Start Date: _____	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Day of the week:							
I went to bed last night at:	pm/am	pm/am	pm/am	pm/am	pm/am	pm/am	pm/am
I got out of bed this morning at:	am/pm	am/pm	am/pm	am/pm	am/pm	am/pm	am/pm
Last night I fell asleep:							
easily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
after some time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
with difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I woke up during the night:							
# of times:							
# of minutes:							
Last night I slept a total of:	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours
My sleep was disturbed by:							
List mental or physical factors including noise, lights, pets, temperature, discomfort, stress, ect							
When I woke for the day, I felt:							
refreshed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
somewhat refreshed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
fatigued	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notes:							
Record anything else that may affect your sleep (i.e. your work shift or monthly cycle)							

Week 2

COMPLETE IN THE MORNING

Start Date: _____	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Day of the week:							
I went to bed last night at:	pm/am	pm/am	pm/am	pm/am	pm/am	pm/am	pm/am
I got out of bed this morning at:	am/pm	am/pm	am/pm	am/pm	am/pm	am/pm	am/pm
Last night I fell asleep:							
easily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
after some time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
with difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I woke up during the night:							
# of times:							
# of minutes:							
Last night I slept a total of:	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours
My sleep was disturbed by:							
List mental or physical factors including noise, lights, pets, temperature, discomfort, stress, ect							
When I woke for the day, I felt:							
refreshed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
somewhat refreshed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
fatigued	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notes:							
Record anything else that may affect your sleep (i.e. your work shift or monthly cycle)							

COMPLETE AT THE END OF THE DAY

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Day of the week:							
I consumed caffeinated drinks in the: (M)orning, (A)fternoon, (E)vening, (N/A)							
M/A/E/NA How many?							
I exercised at least 20 minutes in the: (M)orning, (A)fternoon, (E)vening, (N/A)							
M/A/E/NA							
Medications I took today:							
Took a nap?	Yes or No	Yes or No	Yes or No	Yes or No	Yes or No	Yes or No	Yes or No
If yes, for how long?							
During the day, how likely was I to doze off while performing daily activities: No chance, slight chance, moderate chance, high chance							
Throughout the day my mood was: Very pleasant, pleasant, unpleasant, very unpleasant							
Approximately two hours before going to bed, I consumed:							
alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a heavy meal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
caffeine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In the hour before going to sleep, my bedtime routine included: reading a book, using electronics, taking a bath, relaxation exercises, stretches, etc.							



**Still can't sleep?
Have you tried...**

eating earlier
gentle stretching
getting cooled off
a few easy leg exercises
writing down your thoughts
cutting out caffeine late in the day
sleeping in a fresh bed or on the couch
writing your to-do list before bed
using white noise or ear plugs
visualizing yourself sleeping
a warm shower before bed
talking to your doctor

SLEEP APPS

MEDITATION



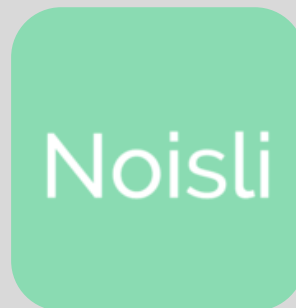
MEDITATION



MUSIC



SOUNDS



STORIES



TRACKER





CommonHealth

www.commonhealth.virginia.gov



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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
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