



Waking Up Is Hard to Do:

Get Our Best Tips for Making It Easier!

Lots of people set the alarm with the best of intentions, knowing that's the time they need to get up to meet the day's demands. But then the alarm clock seems to ring far before they're ready to rise, so they're hitting snooze and, eventually, running late. Something's got to give.

The key lies inside your body. "An important factor in being able to wake up easily at the desired time in the morning is the timing of one's circadian rhythm, or 'body clock,'" says sleep researcher Leon C. Lack, PhD, a professor in the school of psychology at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia.

All About Sleep Cycles

We go through four to six "sleep cycles" every night. Each cycle consists of five stages, ranging from very light sleep (stage 1) to very deep sleep (stage 4) and then the rapid eye movement stage, during which you are most likely to dream.

Waking up out of a deep stage 3 or stage 4 sleep is notoriously difficult. That's why being awakened from a nap can be so disorienting. It's also why waking too early in the morning can mean a miserable start to your day. "Most people hit their deepest sleep between 4 a.m. and 6 a.m.," says WebMD sleep expert Michael Breus, PhD, "so it's very hard to wake up during that time."

How Much Sleep Do You Need?

If you can avoid waking that early (and few of us can!), the next step is to figure out what time you should go to bed to get a good night's rest. Sleep cycles take, on average, about 90 minutes. "That means you need about 7.5 hours of sleep each night," Breus says, "and if you count backwards from when you have to wake up, you can figure out what time you need to go to sleep in order to wake more easily."

Of course, some people require six hours of sleep a night, while others need nine. To complicate matters further, sleep cycles range from 90 minutes to two hours. "Most people haven't been told what time to go to bed since they were children," Breus says. "So they have to listen to their body's own rhythms to figure it out."

Know Why You Want to Wake Up

Michelle Segar, PhD, a healthy living expert and motivation scientist at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, says that to make any change in your life stick, including waking up on time, you need to clearly define why it's important to you. What's your motivation?

Do you want to get up in time to have breakfast with your family, get in some exercise, or just have a few moments of reflection to be better prepared for your day? Maybe you're just tired of the stress of running late every morning.

Reorganize Your Evening Schedule

To figure out what's interfering with your sleep and therefore your waking up, take a look at your day and how you spend your evenings. You might have to reorganize some of your activities. For example, even if the only time you can get to the gym is after dinner, it can result in poor sleep.

Make Hitting "Snooze" Harder

Now that you've identified the obstacles to going to sleep on time, it's time to create some obstacles to staying in bed. If your alarm is right next to your bed and the big "snooze" button is easy to reach without raising your head off the pillow, you're probably going to try to sleep in longer. Put your alarm clock at the other end of your bedroom so that you're forced to get up to turn it off. And consider setting a second alarm (also far away) if you're having a lot of difficulty getting up.

Keep Your Sleep/Wake Schedule on Weekends

If you're running on empty by the time Friday night rolls around, sleeping in on Saturday could sound like heaven. But compensating on the weekends actually feeds into your sleepiness the following week, because it interrupts your natural body clock, which doesn't have a weekend setting. Whatever your set bedtime/wake time is for the weekday, try to stick to it on the weekends. According to research in *Chronobiology International*, a consistent bedtime on the weekends seems to lead to better sleep and easier waking during the week. Plus you get to spend that weekend morning time any way you'd like.

Get a Sleep Evaluation

Sleep disorders such as obstructive sleep apnea or health issues such as allergies or depression could also be leaving you with poor quality sleep. No matter how hard you try to get to bed on time and wake up on time, you'll still be tired in the morning and sleepy during the day. Talk to your doctor about testing to find out if you have an underlying condition that's making sleep difficult.

(Sources: *Everydayhealth*, *WebMD*)



Stay Safe and Healthy This Summer

The long, hot days of summer can bring dangerously high temperatures. The American Red Cross has steps people can follow to stay safe when it's hot outside:

1. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids. Avoid drinks with caffeine or alcohol.
2. Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, light-colored clothing. Avoid dark colors because they absorb the sun's rays.
3. Stay inside and avoid strenuous exercise during the hottest part of the day.
4. Take frequent breaks if working outdoors.
5. Check on family, friends and neighbors who do not have air conditioning, who spend much of their time alone, or who are more likely to be affected by the heat.
6. Check on your outdoor pets frequently to ensure that they are not suffering from the heat. Make sure they have plenty of cool water.
7. Excessive heat can lead to sunburn, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. If someone is experiencing heat cramps in the legs or abdomen, get them to a cooler place, have them rest, lightly stretch the affected muscle, and replenish their fluids with a half a glass (about 4 ounces) of cool water every 15 minutes.

For more information on what to do when temperatures rise, [download the free Red Cross Emergency App](#). The app also gives users the option to receive alerts for excessive heat watches, warnings and heat advisories.

SAVE THE DATE

Our Lunch-N-Learn on Thursday, July 17 covers ergonomics and stretching. It is an applied science that coordinates the design of devices, systems, and physical working conditions with the capacities and requirements of how we work. In other words, it teaches us how to work more comfortably and how to prevent injuries. [Click here](#) for a sneak peak into ergonomics!

Recipe: Grilled Chicken Salad with Seasonal Fruit

Ingredients

- 1 pound skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
- 1/2 cup pecans
- 1/3 cup red wine vinegar
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1/2 onion, minced
- 1 teaspoon ground mustard
- 1 teaspoon salt substitute
- 1/4 teaspoon ground white pepper
- 2 heads Bibb lettuce, rinsed and torn
- 1 cup sliced fresh strawberries

Directions

1. Preheat the grill on high.
2. Lightly oil the grill grate. Grill chicken 8 minutes on each side, or until juices run clear. Remove from heat, cool, and slice.
3. Meanwhile, place pecans in a dry skillet over medium-high heat. Cook pecans until fragrant, stirring frequently, about 8 minutes. Remove from heat, and set aside.
4. In a blender, combine the red wine vinegar, sugar, vegetable oil, onion, mustard, salt, and pepper. Process until smooth.
5. Arrange lettuce on serving plates. Top with grilled chicken slices, strawberries, and pecans. Drizzle with the dressing to serve.



Nutrition Information per serving (makes six servings): 576 calories | 46 g fat | 21 g protein | 5 g sugar | 72 mg potassium | 57 mg cholesterol | 4 g dietary fiber | 2 g sodium