

# Guide to Sleeping Better & Restoring Energy



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72.8% of nurses are suffering from challenges with sleep (either excessive sleep or sleeplessness).

As a nurse working during the COVID-19 pandemic, you are:

- ♥ working hard to give patients the best care available
- ♥ adjusting to the extraordinary changes brought on by the pandemic
- ♥ worried about your health and that of family and friends
- ♥ managing with limited or inadequate resources
- ♥ determined to give everything you can to combat COVID-19

This guide provides recommendations for sleep and fatigue management during high-intensity periods of work as a result of COVID-19.



## PRIORITIZE SLEEP

**ASK YOURSELF:**

*"How can I commit to getting more sleep? Am I prioritizing sleep?"*

to stay well and provide the best possible care to your patients.

- Maintain a regular sleep schedule to the extent possible on duty and off-duty days.
- Aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period whenever you can.
- Create a comfortable, cool and dark sleeping environment.



## WIND DOWN

**ASK YOURSELF:**

*"How can I prepare myself to sleep?"*

before you head to bed.

- Turn off technology and avoid absent-minded scrolling by not charging devices in the bedroom.
- Unwind by reading, doing gentle stretches, meditating, or practicing progressive relaxation. Try the [Headspace® App](#).



## MANAGE YOUR WORRIES

**ASK YOURSELF:**

*"How can I address my worries and reframe unhelpful thoughts?"*

to improve your sleep.

Concern or anxiety about the coronavirus outbreak is perfectly normal.

- Talk with someone you trust about your worries. Try [Nurses Together](#) or the [Happy App](#).
- Control the amount of news and social media you watch.
- Make a to-do list or journal about your concerns to put your mind at rest. Try [Narrative Expressive Writing](#).



## KEEP TRACK

**ASK YOURSELF:**  
*"How much sleep have I been getting?"*

**of your sleep to help you monitor your energy.**

- Use a wearable fitness tracker to monitor sleep and wake activity.
- Use a phone app to track your sleep.
- Keep a sleep diary.



## MANAGE LIGHT

**ASK YOURSELF:**  
*"Am I using light to manage my sleep and optimize my alertness?"*

**to help you get better sleep and be more alert when you are awake.**

- Block light with eye masks and dark window shades to promote sleep.
- Use light to prompt wakefulness: Open a window, turn on the lights, or use a light box.
- Set your phone's blue-light settings to match your work/sleep schedule.



## GIVE YOUR MIND A BREAK

**ASK YOURSELF:**  
*"Am I finding time to take care of myself and give myself a break?"*

**during waking hours to restore your energy.**

- Build in mental breaks: walk outside, look at nature, or engage in a fun activity.
- Find brief moments during the day to practice mindfulness and deep breathing.
- Eat healthy foods and don't skip meals if you can avoid it.



## MONITOR CAFFEINE

**ASK YOURSELF:**  
*"How much caffeine am I using? Am I using it wisely?"*

**Know when and how much caffeine to use to help you maintain your energy.**

- Limit caffeine intake to 400mg per day—about two medium (16oz) cups of coffee.
- Try to avoid caffeine 6 hours prior to sleeping.
- To reduce your caffeine use, decrease gradually. For coffee drinkers, mix caffeine & decaf.
- Remember: Caffeine use is not a substitute for sleep.



## TAKE NAPS

**ASK YOURSELF:**  
*"When and where can I catch a quick nap?"*

**when you can, if you can't get a full night's sleep.**

- Take a 20-minute power nap to restore your energy.
- Take a longer nap to catch up on sleep.



## INVEST IN SLEEP

**ASK YOURSELF:**  
*"Am I in sleep debt? Am I investing in sleep?"*

**You can incur a sleep debt for a little while, but your body will need to catch up.**

- Sleep longer than you normally would on days off to try to catch up as much as possible.
- Bank sleep ahead of time to prepare yourself for long periods without sleep.

Resources shared from Research Transition Office, Center for Enabling Capabilities and Behavioral Biology Branch, Center for Military Psychiatry and Neuroscience, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research

Selected references: Bonnet et al. (2005). The use of stimulants to modify performance during sleep loss: a review by the sleep deprivation and Stimulant Task Force of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. *Sleep*, 28(9), 1163-1187. | Cocker et al. (2016). Compassion fatigue among healthcare, emergency and community service workers: A systematic review. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 13(6), 618. | Martin-Gill et al. (2018). Effects of napping during shift work on sleepiness and performance in emergency medical services personnel and similar shift workers: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Prehospital emergency care*, 22(sup1), 47-57. | Pigeon et al. (2003). Distinguishing between excessive daytime sleepiness and fatigue: toward improved detection and treatment. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 54(1), 61-69.