

How to get better sleep while working at home

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(HealthDay)—For many, work-at-home orders aimed at fighting the

COVID-19 pandemic have had an unintended side effect: sleep loss.

"We've seen a significant increase in reports of stress-related insomnia in recent months," said Julio Fernandez-Mendoza of the Penn State Health Sleep Research and Treatment Center in Hummelstown, Penn.

Stress and worry about the pandemic is one reason and the novelty of working at home is another, Fernandez-Mendoza said in a Penn news release.

Here are some tips to help you get a good night's sleep:

- Have a daily routine. Do regular tasks like waking up, showering, eating, engaging in [leisure activities](#) and going to bed at set times. "Sticking with regular habits keeps your circadian rhythm anchored like a boat in the ocean," Fernandez-Mendoza said.
- Keep work and sleep areas separate. The bedroom should be for sleep and sex—and no electronics. Pick another place for work.
- Keep your work area lit during the day. Get as much natural light as possible. At night, close the blinds and dim the lights at least two hours before bedtime.
- Take 15-minute breaks from the computer. Take a coffee break, go for a walk or do an activity. Stay hydrated. Spend time outdoors.
- Check email or work-related texts only during work hours. Set a schedule with your employer and use autoreply to tell people you'll reply to overnight emails in the morning.
- Plan some worry time. People often go from work to dinner without talking about their day and wonder why they can't sleep. Fernandez-Mendoza suggests setting aside 15 minutes two hours before bed each night for this exercise: "Write a list with two columns. In the first column, write the worries, issues or

problems of the day or the next day. In the second column, write the three best potential solutions that come to mind. This teaches your brain to problem-solve, sends a message that the workday is done, and prepares you for the next day."

- Be physically and mentally active. Do activities you enjoy like reading, writing, talking with family members or playing video games. Also, take a walk—active people sleep better.
- Get [family members](#) involved. Set a bedtime you and your kids can agree on.
- Don't toss and turn in bed. If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up, go to another room and do an activity. Get back in bed when you're sleepy. "Staying awake in bed fuels sleeplessness and can lead to developing chronic insomnia," Fernandez-Mendoza said.

More information: For more tips on sound sleep, visit the [Sleep Foundation](#).

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