



MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL
HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
TEACHING HOSPITAL

BRAIN
HEALTH
INITIATIVE



ACADEMY FOR
BRAIN HEALTH
AND PERFORMANCE

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Sleeping for Good Health, Including your Brain Health

Making sure you consistently get a good night's sleep is one of the best ways you can improve your immunity and defend against viruses and disease. Sleep also boosts your brain health and fights brain illness. According to Michael Breus, PhD, the Brain Health Initiative's sleep expert and America's Sleep Doctor, sleep is a natural immune booster. Sleep is necessary for your immune system to run as efficiently as possible, and for your brain to perform optimally. According to Dr. Breus, here's why:

- **Sleep fosters T cell production.** T cells are white blood cells that play a critical part in the immune system's response to viruses. Sleep deprivation, meanwhile, stops T cells from responding efficiently — and makes it more difficult for the body to fight back against illnesses.
- **Sleep improves the immune system's response time.** By completing the four sleep cycles required for a good night's sleep you are supporting the release and production of cytokine, a multi-faceted protein that helps the immune system quickly respond to antigens.
- **Poor sleep is a factor in getting sick.** Researchers from the University of California, San Francisco highlighted last year that poor sleep was the number one factor in determining whether someone would get sick. These findings were indicated after being exposed to the cold virus.

Dr. Breus doesn't suggest that sleep is a panacea for coronavirus or any illness. Rather, an opportunity to practice the fundamentals. There's no debate sleep is a vital component of a healthy brain and body.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Here are seven tips from Dr. Breus to get a good night's sleep.

1. **Give yourself an electronic curfew of 90 minute prior to lights out:** This means a MEDIA DIET before bed (you need time to relax and destress). Remove blue light by wearing blue light blocking glasses, it will help you wind down before bed and help your body produce melatonin on the proper schedule.
2. **Consider meditation or progressive relaxation before bed or while falling asleep.**
3. **Compile a gratitude list in your mind (while lying in bed, in the dark):** Many people think stressful thoughts as they fall asleep (which makes sense, it's the first time all day you get to think by yourself), but that causes increases in our fight or flight hormones. Thinking less stressful or positive thoughts can help reduce stressful feelings and help with sleep (improves deep sleep and encourages more positive dreams).
4. **Keep your schedule consistent:** The more consistent your wake-up time, the more consistent your overall body function. **Avoid extra napping** if you are home bound, it will only disrupt your nighttime sleep.
5. **Lower stimulants and depressants (e.g., caffeine and alcohol).** If you are already stressed out, adding caffeine to the mix is NOT a great idea, it will only increase the unwanted side effects. Alcohol, while making you feel sleepy, does NOT allow for quality rest, which in turn will make you feel even more stressed if you have a hangover the next day. It also makes you less able to fight a virus.
6. **Take a hot shower or bath 90 minutes before bed:** Wash off all those germs and increase your core body temperature. Your body temperature will decrease once you get out of the tub and help produce melatonin naturally.
7. **Make sure your environment is clean:** If possible, use HEPA filtration for your bedroom air. Wash sheets 2x a week (in HOT water), try to do an overall deep cleaning of your bedroom, you will be spending a lot of time there!

COMING NEXT...

Today:

- **Brain Health Boost** for Professional Responders and Caregivers: Tips for Taking Care of Yourself During COVID-19

Tomorrow

- **Brain Health Boost:** Food for Mood, Food for Thought, and Food for Staying Healthy
- **Brain Health Boost:** 10 am: Facebook [Mindful Moment](#) sponsored by Lakewood Ranch: 10-15 minute Mind-Body experience (recorded and can be viewed anytime)