

20 STEPS TO BETTER SLEEP FOR YOU AND YOUR RECOVERY

1



Consistent bed time/wake time every day:

Maintaining a consistent daily routine is crucial for fostering healthy sleep patterns, especially in addiction recovery. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) highlights that structured schedules help stabilize sleep-wake cycles, which are often disrupted during substance use and withdrawal, ultimately supporting long-term recovery (NIDA, 2020).¹

2



Maintain a Healthy Eating Schedule

A nutritious diet and consistent eat times support your body's natural rhythms. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse suggests that regular meal timing helps regulate the body's internal clock, which is especially beneficial in addiction recovery, as disruptions in metabolic and sleep cycles can impact overall well-being. Additionally, avoiding late-night eating prevents the digestive system from overworking during rest, promoting better sleep quality (NIDA, 2021).²

3



Regulate Napping

Limit naps to 20 minutes to boost alertness and mood without disrupting your sleep cycle. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) highlights that long or frequent naps can interfere with nighttime sleep, which is crucial for addiction recovery. When sleep-deprived, it may be best to skip napping altogether to maintain a stable sleep schedule and support overall recovery (NIDA, 2021).³

4



Use Exercising Well

Engage in daily exercise to expend excess energy and promote restful sleep. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) indicates that regular physical activity supports addiction recovery by reducing stress, improving mood, and regulating sleep patterns. Morning workouts are ideal, but if exercising in the evening, aim to finish at least 2-4 hours before bedtime to prevent sleep disruption (NIDA, 2021).

5



Dedicate your space:

Reserve your bed exclusively for sleep to reinforce a strong mental association between your bedroom and rest. Research from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) emphasizes that avoiding activities like work or eating in bed helps regulate sleep patterns, which is especially important for individuals in addiction recovery, as sleep disturbances can contribute to relapse risk (NIH, 2021).⁵

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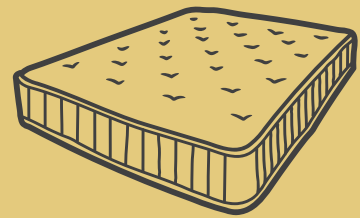
6

Calm

Reduce Stress

Avoid stressful activities like arguments or work before bed, as they can trigger a "fight or flight" response, making it harder to relax and fall asleep. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) highlights that managing stress is crucial in addiction recovery, as heightened stress levels can disrupt sleep and increase relapse risk. To promote restful sleep, resolve conflicts earlier in the day and finish work well before bedtime (NIDA, 2021).

7



Make Your Bed Inviting

Invest in a quality mattress and fresh bedding to improve sleep quality and overall well-being. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) emphasizes that a comfortable sleep environment is essential for restoring healthy sleep patterns, which are often disrupted in addiction recovery. Clean, comfortable bedding can enhance relaxation and promote deeper, more restorative sleep (NIDA, 2021).

8



Identify Possible Disorders

Sleep disorders, like sleep apnea, are common and can significantly impact recovery. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) suggests that untreated sleep disturbances can worsen stress, impair cognitive function, and increase relapse risk. If you experience persistent sleep disruptions, a sleep study can help identify underlying issues and improve long-term recovery outcomes (NIDA, 2021).

9



Use the Sun

Expose yourself to natural morning sunlight to help regulate your sleep-wake cycle and boost alertness. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) highlights that natural light exposure supports circadian rhythm stability, which is essential for sleep and overall well-being in addiction recovery. Sunlight also helps the body produce Vitamin D, which plays a role in mood regulation and energy levels (NIDA, 2021).

10



Warm Up, then Cool Down

Taking a warm bath before bed can promote relaxation and improve sleep quality. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) suggests that a drop in body temperature after a warm bath helps signal the brain that it's time to sleep, supporting healthy rest — especially important in addiction recovery. Relaxing both the mind and body before bed can reduce stress and improve overall sleep patterns (NIDA, 2021).

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Don't Just Lay There.

If you can't fall asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed and engage in a calming activity like reading, journaling or meditation. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) suggests that lying awake can increase stress and reinforce insomnia, which is particularly harmful in addiction recovery. Avoid watching the clock, as it can heighten anxiety and make it even harder to sleep (NIDA, 2021).

12



Avoid Sleep Disrupters

Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine, especially in the hours leading up to bedtime, as they can disrupt sleep quality. Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants that increase alertness and make it harder to fall asleep. Alcohol, though initially sedating, interferes with deep sleep and can cause awakenings. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) states that these substances can worsen sleep disturbance, which is already common in addiction recovery. (NIDA, 2021).

13



Create a Bedtime Routine

Establish a calming evening routine to improve sleep and support recovery. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) highlights that activities like stretching, journaling, reading, or meditating before bed help reduce stress and signal the body to wind down. Consistently following a bedtime ritual strengthens sleep patterns, which is crucial for addiction recovery (NIDA, 2021).

14



Resolve Nightmares

Avoid frightening or stressful content before bed, especially if you're prone to nightmares. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) suggests that negative mental stimulation before sleep can increase stress and disrupt rest, which is particularly concerning in addiction recovery. Instead, use positive imagery to promote relaxation. If persistent nightmares affect your sleep, consult a healthcare professional for support (NIDA, 2021).

15



Press Through When Needed

Maintain your daily routine even after a poor night's sleep to support a stable sleep-wake cycle. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) emphasizes that consistency in daily activities helps regulate the body's internal clock, which is especially important in addiction recovery. Disrupting daytime routines can worsen sleep issues and increase stress, making long-term recovery more challenging (NIDA, 2021).

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Deal with Anxiety

Manage anxiety before bed with positive visualization, gratitude practices, or studying uplifting content. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) highlights that reducing stress and focusing on positive thoughts can improve sleep quality, which is essential for addiction recovery. Cultivating a peaceful mindset before sleep helps regulate emotions and supports long-term healing (NIDA, 2021).

17



Deal with Worry

Reduce nighttime worry by journaling your thoughts before bed. Writing down concerns can help clear your mind, process emotions, and reduce stress. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) suggests that managing stress through journaling, deep breathing, or guided meditation can improve sleep quality, which is vital for addiction recovery. Other effective strategies include listing solutions to worries, practicing gratitude, or setting intentions for the next day to promote a sense of control and calm (NIDA, 2021).

18



Screens and Lights

Limit screen time before bed to improve sleep quality. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) highlights that blue light from phones, tablets, and laptops suppresses melatonin production, making it harder to fall asleep—especially crucial in addiction recovery. Avoid screens at least two hours before bed and charge devices outside the bedroom to reduce distractions and promote a restful environment (NIDA, 2021).

19



Empty the Tank

Limit water intake before bed to prevent frequent nighttime awakenings. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) highlights that disrupted sleep can negatively impact addiction recovery by increasing stress and impairing cognitive function. To promote uninterrupted rest, reduce fluid consumption in the evening and empty your bladder before sleep (NIDA, 2021).

20



Consistency is King

Consistency is key to healthy sleep habits, as irregular sleep patterns can disrupt the body's internal clock. Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) emphasizes that maintaining a stable sleep schedule helps regulate circadian rhythms, which is especially important in addiction recovery. Inconsistent sleep habits can lead to fatigue, stress, and increased relapse risk, making routine essential for long-term well-being (NIDA, 2021).

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