

# Sleep & Anxiety During a Pandemic



Due to COVID-19, we are dealing with several new realities – social distancing, working from home, limiting trips to the grocery store, and less time spent in person with family and friends. As a result, our anxiety may be high, and we may have trouble falling or staying asleep. Below are a few tips to help support your sleep during this unprecedented time.

## Tips for Improving Your Sleep and Managing Anxiety

**Stay active** – Exercise has been found to both lower anxiety and improve sleep. Make time to move your body in the morning or afternoon to help keep your sleep and wake cycle on track. However, try not to exercise right before bed, as it can actually inhibit deep sleep.

**Create a sleep sanctuary** – Control the light, sound, and temperature of your bedtime to foster a good night's rest. The darker, quieter, and cooler you keep your bedroom, the greater chance you have of quickly falling asleep and staying asleep. Taking a shower or bath shortly before bed can also help lower your body temperature and help you fall asleep more easily.

**Limit caffeine and alcohol** – Drinking too much caffeine or consuming it too late in the day can increase anxiety and disrupt your sleep cycles. Consuming alcohol close to bedtime can also increase your heart rate and keep you awake.

**Calm your mind** – There are many relaxation techniques that can help calm your mind throughout the day and improve sleep. Mindfulness, meditation, yoga, and breathing exercises are a few, but it can also be as simple as taking a short walk during the day. If you practice techniques for calming your mind during the day, then it will be easier to trigger your relaxation response at night.

**Limit screen time** – Your phone, tablet, and TV emit light that keeps your brain awake, so try to limit them an hour before bedtime. Checking email or doing work right before bed can also trigger anxious thoughts and make it difficult to stay calm. Consider setting an alarm to remind you to turn off electronics before bed. Also consider listening to music or reading a book to quiet your mind.

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