

# The Do's and Don'ts of Napping

If you're sleep deprived or just looking for a way to relax, you might be thinking about taking a nap. Napping at the wrong time of day or for too long can backfire, though. Understand how to get the most out of a nap.

## What are the benefits of napping?

Napping offers various benefits for healthy adults, including:

- Relaxation
- Reduced fatigue
- Increased alertness
- Improved mood
- Improved performance, including quicker reaction time, better memory, less confusion, and fewer accidents and mistakes



## What are the drawbacks to napping?

Napping isn't for everyone. Some people have trouble sleeping in places other than their own beds, while others simply can't sleep during the day. Napping can also have negative effects, such as:

- *Sleep inertia.* You might feel groggy and disoriented after waking up from a nap.
- *Nighttime sleep problems.* Short naps generally don't affect nighttime sleep quality for most people. However, if you experience insomnia or poor sleep quality at night, napping might worsen these problems. Long naps might interfere with nighttime sleep.

## When should I consider a nap?

You might consider making time for a nap if you:

- Experience new fatigue or unexpected sleepiness.
- Are about to experience sleep loss, for example, due to a long work shift.
- Want to make planned naps part of your daily routine.

## Could a sudden increased need for naps indicate a health problem?

If you're experiencing an increased need for naps and there's no obvious cause of new fatigue in your life, talk to your health care provider. You could have a sleep disorder or another medical condition that's disrupting your nighttime sleep.

## Is taking a nap better than coffee?

Yes, because caffeine can decrease memory performance. So you may feel more wired, but you are also prone to making more mistakes.



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## What's the best way to take a nap?

To get the most out of a nap, follow these simple tips:

- *Keep naps short.* Aim to nap for only 10 to 30 minutes. The longer you nap, the more likely you are to feel groggy afterward.
- *Take naps in the afternoon.* The best time for a nap is usually midafternoon, between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.
- *Create a restful environment.* Nap in a quiet, dark place with a comfortable room temperature and few distractions.

After napping, be sure to give yourself time to wake up before resuming activities — particularly those that require a quick or sharp response.



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