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## Better Sleep

Many people suffer from difficulty sleeping. Having good sleep habits can be an important way to help you have a better night's sleep. Talk to your medical provider if you continue to have difficulty sleeping so that they can find the best treatment for your unique situation.

### Tips

- **Set a consistent sleep schedule**  
Establish a sleep schedule that is consistent and does not vary more than an hour. Also avoid taking naps to make up for lost sleep. If you must take a nap, keep it shorter than one hour and before 3 PM.
- **Use your bed only for sleep**  
Teach your body to associate your bedroom with sleep so that you will start to feel sleepy when you go to bed.
- **Get out of bed if you can't sleep**  
If you haven't fallen asleep in 20-30 minutes, get up and go to a low-lit area to do something calming, and then return to bed once you feel sleepy again. Avoid using screens or another stimulating activities which are not conducive to sleep. Try listening to soft music, reading a calming book, or another relaxing activity to take your mind off your worries.
- **Have a soothing nighttime routine**  
Each night before bed, signal to your body that it is time for bed by having a nighttime ritual such as having a warm bath, having a cup of caffeine-free herbal tea, or reading for a few minutes. Before bedtime, avoid exercise or engaging in potential stressful activities such as watching the news.
- **Use relaxation techniques**  
Relaxing your body or your mind can help you calm worrying or mental distractions that keep you up at night. Relaxation techniques such as guided imagery or progressive muscle relaxation can help you calm your mind so that you can get to sleep faster. The application Calm has helpful relaxation techniques. For more information and guides for relaxation techniques, visit [www.bloomcounselingdc.com/get-started](http://www.bloomcounselingdc.com/get-started)



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## Relaxation Technique-Progressive Muscle Relaxation

It may help to have soothing music or sounds of nature playing while you use this technique. If you find your mind wandering, this is common at first, just notice that you are distracted and, in a non-judgmental way, return your focus to the task at hand. Like with most relaxation techniques, practicing consistently is the key.

In progressive muscle relaxation exercises, you tense up a particular muscle group and then relax them.

### General steps

- 1) Find a quiet, comfortable place to sit or lay down
- 2) Close your eyes and take a few slow deep breaths to help you relax
- 3) Tense the muscle group described, making sure you can feel the tension but not so much that you feel pain or discomfort.
- 4) Keep the muscles tensed for approximately 5 seconds.
- 5) Relax the muscles, keeping them relaxed for approximately 10 seconds, noticing the sensation.

### Relaxation sequence

- 1) Right hand and forearm- Make a fist with your right hand.
- 2) Right upper arm- Bring your right forearm up to you shoulder to "make a muscle".
- 3) Left hand and forearm- Repeat as for the right hand and forearm.
- 4) Left upper arm- Repeat as for the right upper arm.
- 5) Forehead- Raise your eyebrows as high as they will go as though you were surprised by something.
- 6) Eyes and cheeks- Squeeze your eyes shut.
- 7) Mouth and jaw- Open your mouth as wide as you can, as you might when you're yawning.
- 8) Shoulders- Tense the muscles in your shoulders as you bring your shoulders up towards your ears.
- 9) Shoulder blades/ back- Push your shoulder blades back, trying to almost touch them together so that your chest is pushed forward.
- 10) Chest and stomach- Breathe in deeply, filling up your lungs and chest with air.
- 11) Hips and buttocks- Squeeze your buttock muscles.
- 13) Right upper leg- Tighten your right thigh.
- 14) Right lower leg- Do this slowly to avoid cramps. Pull your toes towards you to stretch the calf muscle.
- 15) Right foot- Curl your toes downwards.
- 16) Left upper leg- Repeat as for the right upper leg.
- 17) Left lower leg- Repeat as for the right lower leg
- 18) Left foot- Repeat as for right foot.

For more examples and information about stress management and relaxation techniques, visit [www.bloomcounselingdc.com/get-started](http://www.bloomcounselingdc.com/get-started)