How to create your perfect sleep environment

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We all know that a sleepless night can have a significant impact on the way you feel the next day.

Luckily, there are many tips and tricks to improve your sleep environment to increase your chances of getting healthy slumber each night.

To help identify ways to enhance your bedroom, we have compiled several helpful tips.

Make your bedroom a sanctuary

According to Terry Cralle, nurse and spokesperson for the Better Sleep Council, the bedroom is the gateway to sleep and the last stop in the bedtime ritual. Having the right environment can make a big difference.

Oddly enough, people often overlook the important connection between their sleep environment and a good night's sleep.

Think of your bedroom as your sleep sanctuary, and get rid of the unfolded laundry, exercise equipment and stack of bills on the night table.

"The environment you sleep in is just as important as your waking environment, especially if you want to feel better and stay alert throughout the day," says Craig McAndrews, Chief Learning Officer for Mattress Firm. "Creating a space that enables uninterrupted and restorative sleep is an easy way to improve your sleep quality and overall well-being."

It's also important to consider how technology affects your sleep. Studies have shown that bright light can trick your body into thinking it isn't nighttime.

Consider removing or limiting the use of devices such as televisions, computers, tablets and cellphones to avoid this problem.

A 'snooze-worthy' atmosphere

The design of your bedroom matters. Consider painting the walls of your space a soothing color to help coax your body to sleep. Calming shades of blue, green, silver or pale yellow are great options for creating a relaxing environment.

The noise level and lighting of your bedroom are other important factors to note. Our bodies sleep best in environments that are both quiet and dark. Consider investing in blackout curtains and nightlights for surrounding rooms, to ensure your space is as dark as possible. To reduce noise

disruptions while you sleep, use a white noise app on your smartphone or sleep with your ceiling fan running.

If you're a daily snooze-button offender, try relocating your alarm clock to an area away from your bed. Hitting snooze can confuse your body and the multiple abrupt awakenings can cause you to feel more tired.

Respect sleep cycles

Our sleep cycles run for 90 minutes and consist of four stages, the last one being deep REM sleep, says Bob Hayden, a chiropractor and Georgia delegate of the American Chiropractic Association. We go through several of these stages each night.

The fourth stage of the cycle is especially important for our bodies and should not be disrupted. During this stage, children's bodies secrete a growth hormone that is essential for development, and adults synthesize a protein that is crucial to healing.

According to Hayden, you should avoid the consumption of caffeine and other liquids two hours before bedtime to better sleep throughout the night. You should also avoid eating within four hours before going to sleep.

Hayden also suggests going for a peaceful walk outside before bedtime, which will help your body relax and work off tension.

Invest in a good mattress

While there is no single mattress that is best for everyone, it is important to identify the sleep surface that provides the best support for your body specifically.

Cralle says people frequently ask her which mattress is best. "You can't look at it that way. You need to ask what's the best mattress for you."

The best way to find the best mattress is to visit a store to try several options and determine the ideal support for you.

"A bed is a very personal thing, like a car," Hayden says. "It needs to feel comfortable to your skin while it supports your skeleton."

A mattress should be supportive, but that doesn't mean firmest is always best, Cralle says — you need to be comfortable. Though the bedroom should always be cool, a mattress also affects sleep temperature

Mattresses that feel comfortable for younger individuals, may not feel as relaxing for some in their 60s. As our bodies age, skin gets thinner and we lose muscle mass, which requires different types of support.

Experts recommend replacing your mattress every eight years, especially if you are waking with aches and pains, have sensitivities to dust mites or are not sleeping through the night.

Cralle said she advised a friend with pro football injuries to get a new bed and he finally did. "Then he called me and said, 'I wish I had listened to you six months ago. I feel 100 percent better,'" she says.

—Teresa Meek, Tribune Content Solutions