

Back to the basics.

Health and fitness is often associated with “the next thing”: The next pill or the next supplement or the next *anything*. Before you try the next thing, make sure your basics are being done well: Get good sleep, eat right, and exercise without injury. The last two get lots of attention. Sleeping deserves its due as well. While we know poor eating and drinking habits make us tired, we sometimes ignore the habits that will give us good sleep. Medical studies report that 70% - 80% of people can improve their sleep with good sleep habits alone.

Here are a few hints to sleeping well.

- Have a regular bed time ***and*** wake-up time. Don't sleep in.
- Exercise, but not within 4 hours of bedtime.
- Get outside. There are multiple benefits to a half hour of sunlight daily (including sleep), as long as you wear sunscreen.
- Eat light meals in the evening.
- Go to bed when you are ready for sleep. Sleep in the bedroom, not the sofa.
- Sleep in a dark, quiet, cool, well ventilated bedroom. Even if you work at night, sleep in a dark and quiet room. TV's in the bedroom are bad for sleep. If you must sleep in the day, make your bedroom dark and as quiet as possible.
- If you are unable to fall asleep in 20 minutes, get up and go into another room. Avoid watching TV as studies show this will delay restorative sleep *more*. Read or do another quiet task.
- If you find you are snoring loudly or simply not getting restorative sleep despite good sleep habits, a visit to your primary care physician can help determine whether special studies or medications are appropriate for you.