

## FEATURE STORY

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## Five Healthy Sleep Habits

Everyone loves that feeling of getting a restful night of sleep. You feel alert, refreshed and ready to take on the day. Healthy sleep habits can make a big difference in your quality of life. Check out the list below for five sleep habits that can help keep you happy and healthy.

### **Sleep schedule**

Stick to a routine of going to bed and getting up at the same time every day, including weekends and holidays. This promotes a better night's sleep by reinforcing your body's sleep-wake cycle. If you can't fall asleep within 15 minutes, get up and do something relaxing, then try again when you are tired. If you choose to nap midafternoon, limit it to 20 minutes so you don't interfere with nighttime sleep.

### **Bedtime ritual**

Do the same thing every night to tell your body it's time to wind down and rest. Take a bath, listen to calming music or read a book – all great ways to transition your body into sleep mode. Avoid TV or other electronic devices before bedtime as they may affect your ability to sleep.

### **Exercise**

Remember to include physical activity in your daily routine to help you fall asleep faster and enjoy a deeper sleep. Getting your body moving during the day not only helps you sleep better at night – it also improves your mood.

### **Sleep environment**

Create an ideal room for sleeping that is cool, dark and quiet. Consider using a fan, blackout shades and earplugs to create a proper setting for sleeping. Also be sure to have a comfortable mattress and pillow.

## Stress

When you feel overwhelmed, your sleep is likely to suffer. Consider healthy ways to manage stress such as setting priorities, getting organized and delegating tasks. Give yourself permission to relax – share a laugh with a friend, try a yoga class or go for a 10-minute walk.

Set yourself up for sleep success by getting the doctor-recommended seven to eight hours of sleep each night. Your body will thank you and so will your friends and family.

Find more healthy sleep habits in [this guide](#) from the National Institutes of Health.

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## Don't Forget the Shots

This month is the perfect time to make sure your child's immunizations are up-to-date before school starts. Immunizations (or vaccines) are typically given through a shot to help keep kids healthy. The shots protect us against many diseases like measles, whooping cough and influenza. And the great news is your plan covers most immunizations at 100 percent. To check your coverage, log on to [mymedica.com](#) and choose "Benefits & Coverage" (Immunizations are under Preventive Care).

Things to keep in mind:

- In general, shots are very safe and most reactions are mild. Serious reactions are extremely rare. If you have questions or concerns about a vaccine, talk with your doctor.
- Most shots are completed by the time your child is 2 years old.
- Your child may run a fever after getting a shot. If yours does, check with your doctor to see if you can give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol). Do not give aspirin to anyone under the age of 18.

For more [information about vaccines](#), visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. Check with your doctor to find out what vaccines your child needs.

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## Heart-Smart Lifestyle

Being smart with your heart is important for everyone, not just for people with heart problems. A heart-healthy lifestyle means being active, maintaining a healthy weight, eating well and not smoking. If you have children, you can be their heart-smart role model. If you have healthy habits, your kids are more likely to build healthier habits in their lives. If you already have heart issues such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure, a healthier lifestyle can help lower your risk for a heart attack or stroke.

An important part of taking care of your heart is a heart-healthy diet. These **10 grocery shopping tips** from the American Heart Association can help you choose good-for-you foods.

1. Buy and eat a variety of fruits and vegetables – especially those packed with fiber such as strawberries, oranges, apples, bananas and peas. Raw vegetables like carrots, celery sticks, cauliflower and broccoli can be great snacks.
2. Avoid fruit juices as they tend to be loaded with sugar.
3. Choose fat-free, low-fat or reduced-fat milk and cheeses.
4. Use egg whites or egg substitutes instead of egg yolks.
5. Eat more fish – salmon, trout and tuna are good options – but stay away from fried fish.
6. When buying poultry, choose cuts labeled "loin" or "round." These typically have the least fat.

7. Buy nuts, including almonds, pistachios and cashews, which are an excellent source of protein. But eat them in moderation as they are high in calories.
8. Use fats and oils in limited amounts. Olive, canola, safflower and sunflower oils are good choices because they have the lowest “bad fats” (saturated and trans fats).
9. Pick breads with whole grains as the first item on the ingredient list.
10. Check food labels at the store to avoid items high in calories, sodium or saturated fat.

Test your heart health IQ with [quizzes](#) on the American Heart Association website.

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