



Important Things to Know About Naps

- Naps may improve your alertness, help you to perform better and feel happier.
- If you know that you are coming up to a time when you will not be able to sleep much, (e.g. a night shift at work) you can prepare for this by taking a nap ahead of time.
- A short nap may also help if you are sleepy but need to 'keep going', for example if you become sleepy while driving.
- Naps should be short, 15-30 minutes is best. With longer naps, you risk going into deep sleep.
- After waking from deep sleep, you may feel disoriented for a while.
- It is best not to have a long nap late in the day, as this may make it difficult for you to sleep at night.
- A nap will not replace good quality sleep at night; it is only a short term solution.

Why nap?

If we don't have enough good quality sleep, we may feel tired and sleepy during the day. This can make it difficult to do our normal daily activities. Naps may help to make us more alert, active and better able to cope during the day.

When can naps be good?

Sometimes we know in advance that we will not be able to sleep when we usually do, for example when going out in the evening and staying up late. A nap beforehand can improve performance at this time and help you to enjoy what you are doing. Such naps can also help in the case of night shift work - a nap before the shift can help you stay awake at work. Also, if you know that you have a long drive ahead, a preparatory nap may help you to stay awake for longer and drive more safely.

Naps can also be good at times when you feel sleepy and you are worried about how well you can do things if you continue without rest. If you feel drowsy during a long drive in the car, a short nap can be taken in a rest area. This will make you more alert during the next phase of the drive.

Some studies have found that if you start to feel sleepy while driving, it helps to have a cup of coffee, immediately followed by a nap of about 15 minutes. The caffeine takes about 30 minutes to start working so when you wake up both the nap and the caffeine will start to make you feel more alert.

How long is a good nap?

When you feel sleepy, it is best to nap for 15-30 minutes. This will improve your alertness and concentration. It is often called a power nap. A short nap of this length may reduce the risk of falling asleep. Sleeping for a longer time is not as effective. After a long nap, you may wake up feeling groggy. This is called sleep inertia. It can make it more difficult to do things well. It may last for a few minutes but can last much longer. Having sleep inertia is more likely if you are not getting enough sleep at night, if you have taken a long nap, or if you have been woken suddenly from a deep sleep.

How can I make my nap better?

Not all people are able to nap during the day. Here is some advice that may help you to nap.

- If you nap regularly, you should try to nap at the same time each day. We often feel most sleepy in the early afternoon, around 2 – 3pm. Being able to sleep during a nap may be easier at this time of day than trying to nap at another time.
- You should nap in a quiet, dark place that is at a comfortable temperature. Close the curtains or wear an eye mask to make it as dark as possible.
- Set the alarm for no longer than 30 minutes, so you know that you won't sleep for too long.

What care should be taken with napping?

When you get ready to take a nap you should make sure you are in a safe place. If you are in your car, make sure you park away from the road, preferably at a rest stop. Be mindful of the risk of feeling disoriented (i.e. sleep inertia) after waking from a nap. At the end of every nap,

be sure to take enough time to wake up fully before starting anything that might be a danger. If you nap during a break from a long drive, take a few minutes to walk around the car after your nap and only get back behind the wheel when you are fully alert.

Do not spend too much time napping during the day. This can make it more difficult to sleep well at night. Naps too late in the day can also be bad for your sleep at night. They may make it harder to fall asleep at your usual time.

A nap during the day does not replace good quality sleep at night. You should make sleep during the night a priority and use napping only when night-time sleep is not enough. If you have a problem with your sleep at night (that is not due to too much napping during the day) consult our other information pages (e.g. [Good Sleep Habits](#) or [Excessive Daytime Sleepiness](#)) and talk about it with your doctor.

Where can I find out more about napping?

www.sleepfoundation.org/article/sleep-topics/napping

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Ongoing concerns about sleep or other medical conditions should be discussed with your local doctor.

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