SLEEP & SLEEP HYGIENE

Obtaining healthy sleep is important for both physical and mental health. Adequate amount and good quality of sleep are basic human needs. It can also improve productivity and overall quality of life. Everyone, from children to older adults, can benefit from practicing good sleep habits. Sleep hygiene is a variety of different practices and habits that are necessary to have good nighttime sleep quality and full daytime alertness.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 3 adults do not get their recommended hours of sleep each night. To promote optimal health and well-being, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and Sleep Research Society recommend that adults should sleep for at least 7 hours per night regularly. But recent surveys in different countries have indicated that the average of sleep duration is less than this amount.

Studies performed all over the world have showed that different sleep disorders are associated with psychiatric and/or somatic problems as well as social life disorders. Sleep deprivation leads to impaired mood, judgment, ability to learn and maintain information. Moreover, it is related to different health problems including cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and increased mortality Furthermore, sleeping for under 7 hours is associated with impaired immune system, a decrease in cognitive performance, and an increased risk of accidents (National Institutes of Health).

Frequent sleep disturbances and daytime sleepiness are the most telling signs of poor sleep hygiene. If you're taking too long to fall asleep, you should consider evaluating your sleep routine and revising your bedtime habits. Just a few simple changes can make the difference between a good night's sleep and night spent tossing and turning.

Promoting regular sleep patterns and healthy sleep habits is known as sleep hygiene. Sleep hygiene methods include going to bed and rising at the same time each day, avoiding large meals, caffeine, and alcohol before bedtime, and avoiding nicotine altogether.

Here are a few free sleep apps designed to help you maximize your recommended 7 hours of sleep:

Relax Melodies
Android: Free
iPhone: Free

Relax Melodies is designed to help you, along with their community of 35 million other users, say goodbye to **insomnia** and get a full night of sleep. If you are having trouble relaxing into a restful sleep, then this is the app for you.
Select some relaxing sounds, add a dash of nature, combine with a melody, and hey presto: your sleep-inducing melody is complete. A choice of mindfulness meditations can be laid over the top of the mix to lure you soundly to sleep.

In addition to creating your own mixes, melodies shared by the Relax Melodies community can be accessed to discover new sound combinations. Integrating your favorite songs from your music library into the sound layers amplifies the soothing experience even further.

Sleep Cycle
[**Android**](#): Free
[**iPhone**](#): Free

Sleep Cycle tracks and analyzes your sleep patterns. Choose your wake up time, and the app will gently stir you from your slumber during your lightest phase of sleep to ensure that you wake up feeling rested, refreshed, and ready for the day ahead.

Your phone's built-in microphone picks up your movements as you sleep using sound and vibration analysis. The app analyzes the data to determine if you are in light sleep, deep sleep, or a dream state known as random eye movement **(REM)** sleep, and it pinpoints the optimal time to wake you up within a 30-minute window that you set.

The Statistics dashboard displays graphs and analysis of your sleep phases, and the Trends dashboard details your sleep quality percentage and sleep and wake up times, and it can even detect, track, and measure snoring. Monitoring sleep with Sleep Cycle is easy, hassle-free, and may give you an extra spring in your step.

Recolor
[**Android**](#): Free
[**iPhone**](#): Free

Recolor delivers the mammoth adult coloring book phenomenon in an app-sized package. More than 1,000 images are provided on Recolor to help you relax, rest your mind, and send you into a Zen-like meditative state. New pictures appear daily.

The Recolor library is organized alphabetically by theme with categories ranging from animals, pictures of food, low polyps, and patterns, to sport, pop art, scenery, and sea life.

Once your image is selected, the app offers a bold and uplifting color palette with various shades and hues to complete your work of art. The idea behind Recolor is to channel your **anxiety** into making a satisfying and creative accomplishment to relieve the **stress** in your life, and hopefully, help you to zone-out to sleep, too.

Sleep Time
[**Android**](#): Free
[**iPhone**](#): Free

Sleep Time uses an accurate state-of-the-art algorithm to analyze sleep and provides comprehensive insights into your sleep patterns. The app monitors your movements over the course of the night and generates customized data of your sleep cycles in easy-to-read graphs and charts.

Similarly to Sleep Cycle, Sleep Time's smart alarm learns to wake you during the perfect moment of your lightest sleep phase for ultimate revitalization. According to Sleep Time, when you wake up during a deep period of sleep, your body takes over an hour to fully awaken, leaving you feeling exhausted and drained. Soundscapes – such as gentle waves and rain forest storms – that simulate the natural environment enhance your ability to drift off quickly. The sophisticated Insights dashboard gives a full report of your shut-eye so that you can find patterns and trends in the variables that affect your sleep.

Pillow
iPhone: Free

Pillow is an advanced sleep tracking and analysis alarm clock that monitors your slumber. Pillow has a clean, inspired design with an intuitive gesture-based interface.

Based on the most recent discoveries in sleep research, Pillow's cutting-edge algorithm uses motion and sound pattern detection to paint a complete picture of your sleep session. A comprehensive sleep stage diagram plots the times you are awake and in the REM, light, and deep phases of sleep, as well as provides sleep session statistics.

Pillow is fully integrated with Apple's Health app to extend the knowledge of your sleep further. Pillow uses health and fitness metrics – including weight, blood pressure, heart rate, dietary calories, and caffeine and alcohol consumption – to visualize how these measures affect your sleep quality.

Relax & Sleep Well
Android: Free
iPhone: Free
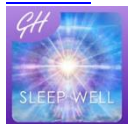
Relax & Sleep Well is the creation of the clinical hypnotherapist and bestselling self-help author Glenn Harrold. This app is the go-to place to destress and overcome anxiety while instilling healthy sleep habits. The app includes four free stress-busting hypnotherapy and meditation recordings. A further 80 of Harrold's highly acclaimed recordings can be purchased in-app, which cover topics including insomnia, anxiety, weight loss, mindfulness, confidence, and self-esteem to name a few.

Each hypnosis track includes background sound effects that have been selected specifically for their key and frequency to guide you into a deep level of relaxation. Harrold's calming voice combined with the subtle soundscapes will soothe you into a dreamy and quiet state.

Digipill
Android: Free

iPhone: Free

Beat insomnia, reduce stress, lose weight, increase motivation, and relax all through the power of a digital pill. Digipill wins hands down for innovation, using a formulated blend of language and sound to engage and activate the mind, change your thinking, and promote well-being.

Choose an audio pill based on your current needs, lay back with some high-quality headphones, and close your eyes. The first pill in your cabinet is free. Extra pills can be purchased in the Pharmacy, or unlimited access to all pills can be gained by subscribing to repeat prescriptions.

Each pill has a treatment time of around 30 minutes and features names such as "Sleep Deeply" (prescribed for a night of rest), "Peace of mind" (for easing anxiety), and "Power Nap" (for a refreshing snooze). Whether you need to calm down, seek motivation, or wind down before bedtime, Digipill has a tailor-made experience to help you.

Pzizz
Android: Free
iPhone: Free
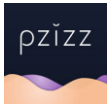
Pzizz is a sleep and power nap system that sends you to sleep at the push of a button. The app helps you to "fall asleep fast, stay asleep, and wake up feeling refreshed."

Pzizz applies the science of psychoacoustics, which is a branch of psychology that explores sound perception and its physiological effects. Through examining clinical studies, Pzizz has developed sound sequences and dynamic dreamscapes that are tailor-made for each portion of the sleep cycle.

The sleep-optimized mix of sound effects, music, and voiceover quietens your mind and sends you to sleep for the optimum amount of time to feel revived the next morning. Pzizz invites you to take their 7-day sleep challenge before going Premium to unlock their "ultimate sleep experience."

(*This material is cited from the National Institutes of Health:*
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4923839/*;*
Medical News Today: https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/317816*; and the National Sleep Foundation*)

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