

# Sleep: Morning Routine



## *A great night's sleep begins in the morning!*

Yes! In the morning. Why? Exposing your eyes to early morning sun for 5–20 minutes within an hour of waking increases levels of serotonin (the feel good hormone) in the brain. Who doesn't want to feel good in the morning! That early morning sun is full of blue light that promotes wakefulness. Early morning exposure to sunlight is critical to keeping your circadian clock in rhythm. It is the contrast between very bright light in the morning and dim light in the evening that tells your brain whether you should be awake and alert, or calm and preparing for sleep.

In addition to serotonin making us feel great, it is converted to melatonin toward evening. Melatonin is the hormone that prepares your body for sleep. That's why a great night's sleep begins in the morning! All hormones have many functions inside the body. In addition to preparing your body for sleep, melatonin also supports the immune system, helps to regulate blood pressure, decreases accumulation of plaques in the brain through a cleansing process that happens ideally between 11:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m., and improves thyroid function and insulin sensitivity.

This is why our first step to addressing sleep challenges is going to be creating a morning routine that works for you.

## What does a good morning routine look like?

This is your time. You get to control how you spend this time and how you start your day. Some things to consider:

- Create space for getting ready.
- Identify any self care practices you want to include in your routine, such as meditation, reading, yoga, working out, or journaling.
- Avoid starting your day with screen time.
- Aim to go outside and breathe in the fresh air within 20 minutes of rising.
- Delay caffeine intake for 1 to 1.5 hours after waking. The boost you get from caffeine is minimal compared to your normal cortisol boost. By waiting until cortisol starts to wane at 1 to 1.5 hours, you'll get a nice cortisol re-boost from the caffeine.

In the winter, getting that early morning sun may be more challenging. Our work schedules, unfortunately, usually don't change when sunrise does. To give yourself a boost, use very bright indoor lighting. When you take a break later in the morning or at lunch, try to have your break/lunch in natural light for at least a few minutes, and try to include more natural light at the end of the work day. Then, be sure to have your home environment dimly lit to have that contrast between daylight and evening.

## Where to start?

Designing a morning routine may seem daunting at first. Where do you start? Start with just ONE THING! Natural sunlight for 5–20 minutes (ideally 20 minutes) will get you the most bang for your buck in getting a good night's sleep, as well as improving your mood and energy throughout the day! If you have young kids, maybe standing at the bus stop for those minutes is a two-fer. If you have a commute to work, parking at the furthest end of the parking lot and slowly walking in can give you that 10 minutes of sunshine. And sometimes just leaving 10 minutes earlier, puts you ahead of the morning rush hour! If you need help, check-in with your Care Team for support and guidance.

## An ideal routine might look like this.

1. Wake up naturally, without an alarm.
2. Enjoy natural sunlight 5–20 minutes.
3. Drink about 16 oz of water to hydrate after sleeping (avoid caffeine for 1 to 1.5 hours after waking to allow natural cortisol to have an effect and get that caffeine boost).
4. Shower and do morning hygiene.
5. Spend some time on meditation, prayer, mindfulness, gratitude, or journaling.
6. Have breakfast.

It will take time to settle into your ideal routine. Start small and layer in each new habit. Give it a try for a few days and see how it works for you! Then modify and add in another layer. You will get there!

**Now it's your turn. Create a list of things you would like to include in your morning routine, even if it's just adding one of these things for right now.**

My List:

## **Weekly action item:** *Create a morning routine*

Wake up time:

Outside by what time:

Outside for how many minutes:

Personal activities to include:

End routine by what time:

## *Great job!*

Now that you have a game plan for the morning, let's put it into action each morning this week and see how it feels. Remember, this is your routine, so you can adjust as you go, but continue to think about ways you can take care of yourself during this time.

At the end of the week, complete the assessment below and make any necessary changes to your morning routine. Next, we'll address your evening routine! See you next week!

### End of Week Assessment:

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being highly successful, how successful was your morning routine? Consider factors such as ability to accomplish tasks in the allotted time, how well you felt prepared for the day, and how well it mesh with your work/family schedules.