



How to Sleep Better During a Pandemic

Stay on Schedule With Your Routine

Establish fixed times for waking up; showering and getting dressed (even if you aren't leaving the house); eating meals at the same time each day; working and exercising; winding down and relaxing before bedtime; and then finally, turning the lights out and trying to fall asleep.

Reserve Your Bed for Sleep and Intimacy

It's important that you create an association in your mind between your bed and sleep and/or intimacy. Avoid other activities, such as bringing a laptop into bed to work or watching a movie or television show, from taking place in your bed.

Don't Stay in Bed if You Can't Fall Asleep

If you find that you're having a hard time sleeping on any given night, don't spend more than 20 minutes tossing and turning. Instead, get up and do something relaxing in very low light and then head back to bed to try to fall asleep.

Create a Comfortable Sleeping Environment

Create a comfortable and inviting setting to doze off by keeping your bed feeling fresh: frequently change your sheets, fluff your pillows, and consider refreshing your bedroom setup with a brand-new mattress, sheets, or any other sleep products that need an upgrade.

Get Exposure to Natural Light

Spend daily time outside in natural light, especially in the morning if you can and even if the sun isn't shining brightly. Open your windows and blinds to let light into your home as much as possible during the day.

Be Mindful of Screen Time

Avoid using electronic devices, such as mobile phones, tablets, and computers, an hour before bed. Use device settings or special apps that reduce or filter blue light, which has been found to interfere with the body's natural sleep-promoting processes.

Be Careful With Naps

Consider a more intentional and consistent napping schedule rather than approaching naps haphazardly. Limit your naps to just 10 to 20 minutes to avoid feeling groggy or try to avoid taking naps altogether.

Stay Active Every Day

Engage in regular physical activity every day, such as doing yoga or walking or participating in live-stream free classes while social distancing. Make sure to avoid excessive physical activity right before bedtime, however.

Practice Kindness and Foster Connections

Kindness and connections can reduce stress and its harmful effects on mood and sleep, so try to find some positive news stories, and use technology to stay in touch with friends and family to maintain social connections despite the need for social distancing.

Utilize Relaxation Techniques

Build relaxation techniques into your routine,

such as deep breathing, stretching, yoga, mindfulness meditation, calming music and quiet reading. Try exploring smartphone apps, like Headspace and Calm, that have programs designed for people new to meditation.

Watch What You Eat and Drink

Try to follow a healthy nutritional plan by aiming for a diet that is rich in vegetables and fruits as well as lean meats. Also, be cautious with the intake of alcohol and caffeine as both can disrupt the quantity and quality of your sleep.

Take a Break from the News

Avoid becoming overwhelmed by the news by trying techniques like bookmarking one or two trusted news sites and visiting them only during a limited, pre-set amount of time each day. This will also cut down the total time that you spend scrolling on social media.

"Sleep Guidelines During the COVID-19 Pandemic." Sleep Foundation, accessed Feb. 10, 2021.

Healthier Shepherd's Pie

PREP TIME: 10 minutes | COOK TIME: 1 hour, 30 minutes | TOTAL TIME: 1 hour, 40 minutes | Serves: 6

Ingredients

POTATOES

- 1 ½ pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and chopped
- ¾ cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons light or fat-free sour cream
- Salt and black pepper
- Paprika

FILLING

- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 2 teaspoons tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 teaspoon fresh rosemary leaves, chopped (or ¼ teaspoon dried rosemary)
- 1 celery stalk, diced
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, chopped (or ¼ teaspoon dried thyme)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, chopped (or ¼ teaspoon dried thyme)
- 8 ounces mushrooms, diced
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 10 ounces frozen mixed vegetables
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- 1 cup low-sodium beef broth

Instructions

1. In a medium pot, boil the potatoes until cooked and soft.
2. Drain the water from the potatoes and add the chicken broth, sour cream, ½ teaspoon salt and pepper. Mash the ingredients together and set aside.
3. Preheat the oven to 400 F.
4. In a large skillet, cook the beef over medium-high heat, breaking the meat up as it cooks. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Set aside the beef on a plate once it's thoroughly cooked.
5. In the skillet, add the oil, onion, celery, garlic and mushrooms and sauté on medium heat about six to eight minutes, until the vegetables are tender.
6. Add the flour, frozen vegetables, beef broth, tomato paste, Worcestershire sauce, rosemary, thyme and cooked meat and mix well. Simmer on low about eight to 10 minutes.
7. Spread the meat on the bottom of a casserole dish. Top with the mashed potatoes and sprinkle it with paprika.
8. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, then place under the broiler for one to two minutes until the potatoes turn golden.
9. Remove the dish from the oven and let it cool for five minutes before serving.



Recipe adapted from: skinnytaste.com/shepards-pie-lightened-up

— Socially Distanced — WEEKEND GETAWAYS

While traveling has lots of positive health benefits, during the pandemic it can be challenging to know where to go and when.

In case you needed a reason to pack your bags, here are five scientifically proven benefits of travel:

- It helps relieve stress.
- It can lower your risk for depression.
- It boosts feelings of happiness and satisfaction.
- It enhances your creativity.
- It can lower your risk for heart disease.

Whether you're looking for a solo sojourn or a family-friendly vacay, we've got a few ideas to help you plan a weekend of respite.

CAMP AT A NATIONAL OR STATE PARK

Connect with mother nature in one of America's many beautiful national or state parks. Whether you choose to stay in an RV, rent a cabin on-site, or sleep under the stars – getting into the great outdoors will surely help you destress and unwind.

RENT A PRIVATE VACATION HOME

Plan the perfect weekend outside the city by booking a secluded cottage in the woods or a house on the lake. Indulge in nature with hikes, swims or outdoorsy activities.

HAVE A STAYCATION AT A HOTEL

If a few days at a resort or hotel sounds like your cup of tea, make sure the property is adhering to rigorous cleaning measures. Some destinations are now even promoting COVID-friendly WFH — Work From Hotel — travel deals aimed at the socially distant traveler. Also, consider remote properties with plenty of open space and outdoor-friendly features. If you're worried about flexibility, many hotels are offering generous cancellation policies right now.

TAKE A ROAD TRIP

If jet-setting is not for you right now, that's A-OK. You still have options! Hit the open road to a remote or rural location you've always wanted to see. Pack a cooler with healthy snacks, turn up the tunes, and don't forget your mask!

"5 Scientifically Proven Health Benefits of Traveling Abroad," Larry Alton, [nbcnews.com](https://www.nbcnews.com), May 19, 2017.

"6 safer, expert-backed ways to take a vacation during the pandemic, from road trips to private vacation rentals and remote campsites," Emily Hochberg, [Business Insider](https://www.businessinsider.com), Jan. 6, 2021.

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