

## Motherhood

Having a new baby can be stressful. Learn ways to relax and rest when you can. This will give you energy to take the best care of yourself and your child. Try the following:

- Ask for help when you need it, and accept help when it's offered.
- Many new mothers feel a little down for a few weeks. Share your feelings with your loved ones. Talk to your healthcare provider if your feelings get in the way of sleeping or eating.
- Try to adjust your baby's sleep to fit a day-night cycle. At night, have lights dim and the setting quiet. During the day, keep your baby active longer. Then he or she will sleep better at night.
- Take a daily walk with your baby. Fresh air and daylight will help you both sleep better.
- When your baby sleeps, lie down for a nap or put your feet up and rest.



## Menopause

Menopause is when you stop having periods for good. In the months or years before menopause, your body produces fewer female hormones. This can cause physical, mental, or emotional changes that may affect your sleep. Ask your healthcare provider if hormone therapy can help you feel and sleep better. Also, try these tips:

- If you have hot flashes and night sweats, avoid caffeine and spicy foods at nighttime. Wear a cotton nightgown and put cotton sheets on your bed. Have a change of nightclothes handy. Keep a window open.
- Mood swings can cause insomnia, memory loss, fatigue, or depression. If these affect your sleep, talk to your healthcare provider. Share your feelings with other women your age. Lift your spirits by exercising and doing things you enjoy.



# Sleep and Women



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Manipal Cure and Care  
No. 14, Manipal Towers, Airport Road,  
Bangalore- 560008

Contact us: 91 - 39893979  
Website: [www.manipalcureandcare.com](http://www.manipalcureandcare.com)  
Email ID: [howareyou@manipalcureandcare.com](mailto:howareyou@manipalcureandcare.com)



CMPMedica India Pvt Ltd.,  
# 640, 10 'A' Cross, WCR, 2nd Stage, Bangalore - 560 086  
# 611-617, Sagar Tech Plaza - A, Sakinaka, Andheri-Kurla Road,  
Andheri (East), Mumbai - 400 072  
# House No. A-9/3, DLF City -1, Gurgaon - 122 002



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## Unique to Women

Do you have trouble sleeping? Many women do. Some life changes are unique to women, such as pregnancy or menopause. These changes, along with the demands of family and work, can affect your health and your sleep. Talk to your healthcare provider if your sleep problems last more than a few weeks. Read on to learn what you can do to improve your sleep and have more energy.



## What Affects Your Sleep

Many factors can affect how well you sleep. Hormone changes can cause mood swings, insomnia, and other problems. Balancing many roles such as mother, partner, worker, and caretaker can also take a toll on your sleep. Worries about these competing demands can keep you awake at night. And, of course, with so much to do, who even has time for sleep? But you need to sleep well to be healthy and have energy. The good news is there are steps you can take to sleep better.

Try this deep breathing technique to help you relax. Sit or lie back in a chair. Take a slow, deep breath. Hold it for 5 counts. Then breathe out slowly through your mouth. Keep doing this until you feel relaxed.



## Tips for Better Sleep

Here are some steps you can take to sleep better:

- Keep a regular sleep schedule. Go to bed and get up at the same time each day.
- Exercise regularly. Avoid strenuous exercise 2 to 4 hours before bedtime.
- Learn to relax. Try a warm bath, yoga, or meditation. Reading a book or listening to music can help you relax before bedtime.
- Create a comfortable setting for sleep. Make sure the room is quiet, dark, and not too hot or too cold.
- Use your bed only for sleep and sex.
- Avoid or limit caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol.

## Life Stages

A woman goes through many stages during her lifetime. These stages are a natural part of being a woman. Physical and emotional changes take place during the menstrual cycle, pregnancy, motherhood, and menopause. These changes can affect sleep, even cause insomnia. But there are ways you can improve your sleep.



## Menstrual Cycle

Many women have symptoms before or during their period. These may include mood swings, cramping, bloating, fatigue, and insomnia. They can affect how you feel and how you sleep. Eating a well-balanced diet low in fat, salt, and



sugar may reduce your symptoms. Vitamin and mineral supplements may also help. Regular exercise can reduce stress and relieve some of your symptoms. You will have more energy during the day and be more tired at bedtime. Afternoon exercise is best. Nighttime exercise may affect your sleep.

## Pregnancy

Getting restful sleep can be a challenge in late pregnancy. This is due to physical and emotional changes. These tips may help you sleep better:

- Take a warm shower before bed.
- To relax, ask your partner to massage your shoulders, neck, or back.
- Sleep with pillows under your stomach and back, and between your knees.
- Take naps if you feel tired during the day.
- To reduce back pain, exercise and practice good posture. Sleep on a firm mattress.
- To reduce frequent urination at night, drink most of your fluids earlier in the day.
- To reduce heartburn, sleep with your upper body raised 6 inches. Don't lie down for at least 2 hours after you eat.
- A creeping or crawling feeling in your legs may affect your sleep. Ask your healthcare provider how to ease your symptoms. Try to walk, stretch, or rub your legs.
- Avoid or limit coffee, black tea, and cola. These may keep you awake at night.
- Weight gain and nasal congestion associated with pregnancy can cause snoring and breathing problems during sleep.