



# SLEEP BETTER CHALLENGE 2018

*We get our best rest when things are cool, dark, and quiet, but if you are having trouble sleeping, commit to one more helpful habit to find your way to better sleep and brighter days!*

**THE CHALLENGE:** Commit to one helpful habit below and stick with it **EVERYDAY** from **March 5th** through **March 25th**

- ◆ Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day
- ◆ Be active everyday
- ◆ Do breathing exercises before bed
- ◆ Limit caffeine
- ◆ Turn off screens an hour before bed



*Registration begins*

*February 20th at*

*[www.commonhealth.virginia.gov](http://www.commonhealth.virginia.gov)*



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## HEALTHFUL HABITS FOR A BETTER NIGHT'S SLEEP

**Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day** - On average we need between 7-9 hours of sleep per night. A recent Gallup poll shows we aren't hitting the mark, as we average 6.8 hours. A simple fix is to set a definite bedtime and wake time, allowing for adequate sleep, and to honor them – even on the weekend. This can add structure to your sleep patterns and improve sleep. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/166553/less-recommended-amount-sleep.aspx>

**Be active every day** - Activity affects sleep. Sleep allows the brain to absorb the day's information and the tissues of the body to heal. With limited mental and physical stimulation throughout the day, the body will resist its need to rest. By being active\* we can improve the length and quality of sleep. \*Exercising right before bed time may cause you difficulty falling asleep. Kohl, Harold W., and Tinker Dan Murray. *Foundations of Physical Activity and Public Health. Human Kinetics, 2012*

**Do breathing exercises before bed** - Relaxing with simple belly breathing exercises can help you fall asleep and enhance sleep quality. Simply count to 4 as you inhale deeply, through your nose, and expand your belly slightly. Then count to 4 again as you exhale through your mouth, causing the belly to flatten.

**Limit caffeine** - Caffeine is a stimulant and may trigger the “fight or flight” response and the release of stress hormones that come with it. Staying away from caffeine after your morning wake up is definitely a smart move that will pay off in ZZZ's.

**Turn off screens an hour before bed** - Cellphones, tablets, laptops, and televisions can keep you awake, even after they are turned off. They emit something called “blue light” which disrupts our natural circadian rhythm and signals us to remain awake. They also may suppress the release of melatonin, a naturally occurring hormone that tells your brain it is time to rest. Remove electronics from the bedroom and avoid screens at least one hour before bed to let the body's natural sleep cycle take over. Starrett, Kelly, et al. *Deskbound: Standing up to a Sitting World. 2016*