Sleep can be tough to come by as a busy student. However, getting the right amount of good quality sleep is essential to promote optimal health as well as both physical and mental performance. Seven to nine hours of sleep is recommended although nine is optimal.

**Why We Need Good Sleep:**
- Promotes healthy brain function
- Heals and repairs your heart and blood vessels
- Maintains a healthy balance of hormones
- Maintains blood sugar levels
- Supports healthy growth and development
- Controls immune function
- Improves memory

**What Happens if You Don’t Sleep?**
Sleep is crucial to optimal brain functioning, thinking, and learning. Too little sleep can make concentrating difficult and impair problem solving. It can also interfere with memory. Adequate sleep allows your body to consolidate the information you are exposed to throughout the day. If those 7-9 hours are not achieved you might not be learning to your full potential. Lack of sleep has also been associated with an increase in appetite. This can lead to weight gain and other detrimental health issues in the future.

**Tips for a Good Night’s Sleep**
- Create a healthy sleep environment. Try to remove bright lights, loud noises, or anything else that may keep you awake.
- Shut off electronics at least 30 minutes before bed. The blue light disrupts melatonin production, an essential sleep regulating hormone.
- Relax a bit before you climb into bed. Find an activity that you find calming. Try a warm bath, reading a book, or enjoying a hot (decaffeinated) beverage.
- Stick to a sleep schedule. Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day, even on the weekends.
- Stop drinking alcohol at least 3 hours before you go to bed, and if you choose to drink alcohol limit intake to 1-2 drinks per hour and 4 or fewer drinks on any one occasion. Any more than this may interfere with your sleep cycle.
- Exercise: 20-30 minutes is all it takes. Try to do this 5-6 hours before you go to bed to allow your body to unwind from the workout.
- If you are a caffeine consumer, try to eliminate consumption after 2 P.M. The effects of caffeine can take up to 8 hours to wear off.
- If you need to nap, shoot for curling up and snoozing earlier in the day and limit to no more than 45 minutes
- Check out more tips here: [https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/blog-entry/tips-good-nights-sleep](https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/blog-entry/tips-good-nights-sleep)
What About Snacking Before Bed?
Here's the deal: it’s perfectly okay to enjoy a little something if you find yourself hungry after dinner.

First look to your previous meals and ask yourself if they were balanced with protein, carbohydrate, and healthy fat. Have you had enough water? Are you short on sleep experiencing the fatigue munchies? If you took care of the above, or need to fuel muscle recovery:

• Try to snack at least two hours before bed. Allowing time for digestion is important to avoid any reflux.

• A small bedtime snack may help you sleep better if you have not had enough to eat during the day. If you are hungry before you fall asleep your body might wake you up in the hopes that you fuel it.

• Choose a snack that is a combination of protein and carbohydrate. This combination will help control blood sugar.

If you are trying to build muscle choose an option with casein like milk, cheese or Greek yogurt. It is long lasting and takes longer to digest.

What Should I Avoid Before Bed?
• Caffeine. Consuming caffeine later in the day or before bed could keep you awake and interfere with sleep.

• Large, heavy meals. A big meal right before bed can lead to reflux.

### Night Time Snack Ideas

- A cheese stick and a few crackers
- Whole grain toast with nut butter
- A piece of fruit and one serving of nuts
- Yogurt
- One glass of low fat milk or chocolate milk
- Cottage cheese with fruit
- Hummus with raw veggies
- Hardboiled egg and a few crackers
- Oatmeal with milk
- Cheese and a few pretzels
- Fruit with nut butter
- Lean lunch meat with cheese and a slice of whole grain bread