SLEEPING WELL, staying healthy

Following healthy sleep habits can make the difference between restless and restful slumber. Researchers have identified a variety of practices and habits—known as sleep hygiene—that can help you maximize the hours you spend sleeping.

- **Exercise Early.**
  Exercise helps promote restful sleep if it is done several hours before you go to bed. Try to finish exercising at least three hours before bed or work out earlier in the day.

- **Turn Your Bedroom Into a Sleep-Induced Environment.**
  A quiet, dark, and cool environment can help promote sound slumber. Keep computers, TVs, and work materials out of the room to help your brain associate your bedroom with sleep.

- **Avoid Stimulants that Interfere With Sleep.**
  Caffeine decreases your quality of sleep and alcohol may help bring on sleep, but can be disruptive throughout the night. Avoid caffeine for four to six hours before sleep and avoid alcohol within three hours of bedtime.

- **Establish a Soothing Pre-Sleep Routine.**
  Light reading before bed is a good way to prepare yourself for sleep. 
  *Ease the transition from wake time to sleep time with a period of relaxing activity an hour or so before bed and avoid stressful, stimulating activities.*

- **Use Light to your Advantage.**
  Natural light keeps your internal clock on a healthy sleep-wake cycle. Let the light in first thing in the morning and get outside for a sun break during the day.

- **Keep your Internal Clock Set With a Consistent Sleep Schedule.**
  Having a regular sleep schedule helps to ensure better quality and consistent sleep. 
  *Try to stick as closely as possible to your routine on weekends to avoid a Monday morning sleep hangover.*

Source: Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School