

OF NAPPING

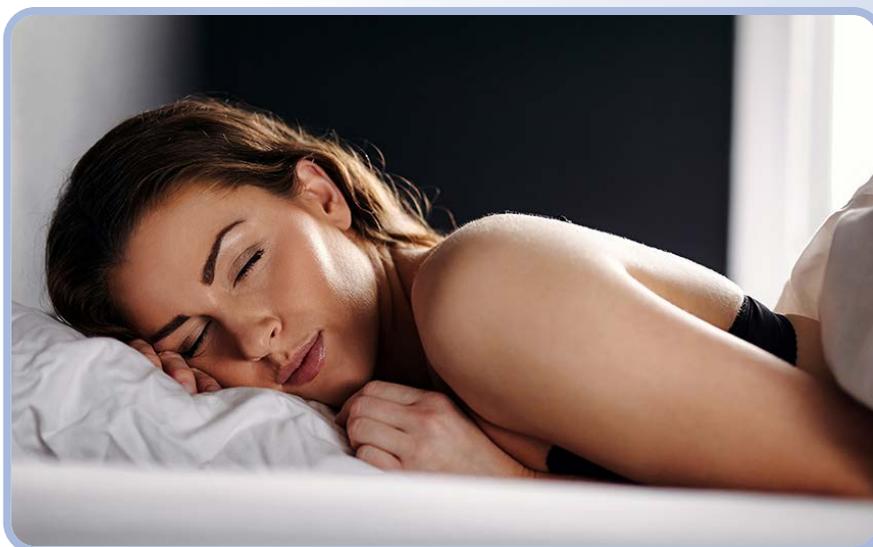
Napping is a natural-wellness practice. A power nap or cat nap is a short nap that terminates before deep sleep. I have greatly benefited for many decades from brief, early-to-mid-afternoon naps on both workdays and days off. I have derived great benefit from them at no cost.

Many world cultures have time carved out for mid-day naps. In Latin cultures, it's called a *siesta*. In Islamic cultures, it is called a *qailulah*. Perhaps a billion people have it built into their lives. Some companies in the USA and abroad have instituted napping rooms or "napping pods" or cubicles in a quiet, dimly-lit room. These companies report that employees are happier and more productive.

Scientific evidence has shown that there is indeed a natural dip in EEG brain waves in early-to-mid afternoons in most people. It's no surprise that many people drink caffeine after lunch to offset this dip. However, it's more natural to take a brief nap if you possibly can. During sleep and naps, the brain gets a chance to clear accumulated waste products and interference patterns.

Here are some specific guidelines about taking naps:

1. Time your nap for early-to-mid-afternoon, as late-afternoon and evening naps can interfere with nighttime sleep.
2. Limit naps to 20 minutes.
3. Find the position that is comfortable and not necessarily in your usual nighttime sleep position.
4. Consider ear plugs and/or an eye mask as needed to reduce sensory input.
5. Avoid interruptions. Have a closed door and possibly a *Do Not Disturb* sign. Your phone should not be in your vicinity unless you want to use it to set an alarm for 20 minutes.



6. You might fall asleep, but you don't have to. Enjoy the respite. Be "in the moment" and non-judgmental.

Inducing naps is a personal matter. Here are some specific techniques:

1. Attend your breathing for 10 or more breaths. Feel free to count the breaths, from 1 to 10, and then backwards, from 10 to 1. You can simply say to yourself, "I'm breathing in. I'm breathing out."
2. You can try a one-second pause at the end of each part of the breath: "In-breath, pause, out-breath, pause."
3. Attend the sound of the breaths, in and out. "Wind arriving inward. Wind exiting outward." Attend the sensation of the breath in the nostrils. Notice that nasal sensation is subtly different between in-breaths and out-breaths: The in-breath is cool and dry, and the out-breath is warm and moist.
4. Attending the breaths can include appreciation: "Breathing in, I extend thanks inward. Breathing out, I extend thanks outward."
5. During well-paced breathing, facial tensions can be released: "In-breath, lips, out-breath, soft. In-breath, eyes, out-breath, soft."
6. Consider alternative body parts as

foci during in-breaths and out-breaths. Feel free to imagine that in-breaths come in through your hands and go out through your feet. Say to yourself: "In-breath, hands, out-breath, feet."

7. If you work at home, you can use a bed. Darken the room. Set a timer if you like. (There are phone apps such as "Power Nap," that have white noise and a timer.)

In conclusion, daytime naps, if you can arrange them, are rests, respites, retreats, rechargers, and refreshers. Like any skill, it is best to practice daily or as often as you can.

—Happy Siesta!

Dr. Shapiro is a career clinic physician who has utilized relaxation techniques with many of his patients.



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