

# CHICAGO BRIDE

## Tips for Brides-to-Be: Sleep Enhances Your Health, Beauty on Wedding Day

Attention, all you brides-to-be: Are you staying up all hours of the night preparing for the special day? Are you stressing yourselves to the point where you're losing valuable sleep time in the process?

If your answers are "yes", then it's time for you to make some changes. While the day of your wedding is an important day in your life, and you take extraordinary steps to make sure everything goes off without a hitch, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) advises all brides-to-be to practice good sleep habits so you can be alert, well-rested and healthy on your wedding day.

"It is hard to imagine a more stressful period than the months before a wedding," said Mary S. Esther, MD, AASM sleep expert. "Not only is there a lot to do to get ready for the wedding, but you are supposed to continue to keep up with your usual daily activities at the same time. And, of course, you want to be at your best, and looking your best, for all the festivities. With so much to do, it is hard to remember that one of the best beauty tips is to get enough sleep. In fact, it should be a priority."

Sleep deprivation can lead to problems for everyone, said Esther, adding that too few Americans, especially women, meet their basic sleep needs. Dr. Esther notes that it is no surprise to learn that in periods of stress, such as planning a wedding, sleep deprivation would be expected to increase.

"Sleep loss causes changes in one's mood," said Esther. "If you are sleep deprived, you are more likely to feel overwhelmed by the tasks you have to accomplish – tasks that would not ordinarily feel too demanding."

Also, when you are sleep deprived, your immune system does not function as well as it does when you've gotten enough rest, said Esther. One way to help ensure you don't come down with a virus just before the wedding is to get enough sleep, said Esther, adding that, in addition, it is known that there are metabolic effects from sleep loss. Sleep is one of the keys to a successful diet and a healthy lifestyle, noted Esther.

Dr. Esther adds that with so much planning to accomplish, the bride and groom may not allow enough relaxation time in the evening, and that those who are stressed are more likely to suffer from insomnia.

The AASM and Dr. Esther offer the following steps a bride can take to improve her sleep hygiene and make sure she looks and feels her best on her wedding day:

- **Don't go to bed unless you are sleepy.** Do something relaxing, but not stimulating, to take your mind off of worries about sleep. This will relax your body and distract your mind.
- **If you are not asleep after 20 minutes, then get out of the bed.** Find something else to do, in another room, that will make you feel relaxed. Once you feel sleepy again, go back to bed.
- **Begin rituals that help you relax each night before bed.** This can include activities such as a warm bath, a light snack or a few minutes of reading.
- **Go to bed and wake up at the same time every morning,** even on weekends and holidays.
- **Get a full night's sleep on a regular basis.**
- **Avoid taking naps if you can.** If you must take a nap, try to keep it less than one hour, and don't nap after 3 p.m.
- **Do not overdose on caffeine.** Trying to make up for being tired by guzzling lots of lattes is not the answer.
- **Avoid alcohol.** Alcohol will shorten the time to fall asleep, but increase arousals during the night. The end result is more sleepiness.
- **Do not have a cigarette or any other source of nicotine before bedtime.**
- **Try to get rid of or deal with things that make you worry.** If you are unable to do this, then find a time during the day to get all of your worries out of your system. Your bed is a place to rest, not a place to worry.
- **Make your bedroom quiet, dark, and a little bit cool.**

Above all, noted Esther, the good news is that the treatment for sleep loss is simple: more sleep.

“Even a single good night's sleep will lead to recovery of concentration and decreased irritability,” said Esther. “So as part of planning the wedding, remember to schedule in relaxation time and plenty of time for sleep.”

The amount of sleep a person needs depends on many factors, including age. For most adults, seven-to-eight hours a night is recommended to achieve good health and optimum performance.

AASM is a professional membership organization dedicated to the advancement of sleep medicine and sleep-related research.