

7 TIPS FOR A GOOD NIGHT SLEEP

Would you like to sleep like a baby without taking drugs?

We take millions of sleeping tablets each year but to avoid the side effects, there are a number of natural remedies you can try first.

Read on to learn some of the ways to get a good quality night's sleep.



1. RELAXING RITUALS

In Chinese Medicine, night time is yin time—or, simply, when the body takes care of itself and repairs. Proper sleep is required for your body to heal itself and regenerate.

To reach deep restful sleep, your mind and heart must be calm. Excessive worry, anxiety, and depression can all disturb the spirit and activate the mind—making it near impossible to fall asleep and stay asleep. Rituals to soothe your mind and induce a sleep response before bed include soaking your feet in Epsom salts for 15 minutes, writing all of your thoughts in a journal to get them out of your head, and practicing relaxation before bed, like the Stress Release meditation below.

Keep away from the computer late at night and switch off the TV well before you go to bed as these can stimulate your mind and hinder relaxation.

2. FOOD CAN DISTURB SLEEP

When you eat late, you can wake up tired. Your body will be busy digesting your dinner while you are trying to sleep, so you won't feel rested in the morning. Do not eat anything for at least three hours before bedtime.

Also, cut back on eating bacon, cheese, chocolate, ham, potatoes, tomatoes, and sausage, especially before bed. These foods contain *tyramine*, which effects neurochemicals like *noradrenaline* (a stress hormone) and can cause insomnia. And, of course if you have sleep problems, caffeine should be cut out.

Eat for sleep! Try eating more grains at dinner; carbohydrates tend to make people sleepy. Another snooze snack is a warm cup of milk; because milk is rich in the amino acid tryptophan, it can sometimes aid in deep sleep. Or if you prefer, eat 1 cup of natural yogurt an hour before bedtime.

3. A PEACEFUL PLACE

Your sleeping environment makes a huge difference to the quality of your sleep. Do everything you can to create a quiet and calm atmosphere. Ideally, your bedroom should be located in the quietest area of your home. Keep the décor minimal. Lighting should be dim and any music that is played should be soothing. Make sure that you have complete darkness whilst sleeping as the light can affect you hormones.

Research has found that lavender, vanilla, and green apple are among the best scents to help lower anxiety and induce sleep, making these smells a good choice for a scented candle or heated essential oil. Try to limit your pets to outside of the bedroom because their movements can keep your body from fully relaxing into deep R.E.M. sleep. As much as possible, your bedroom should be only for sleep.

4. THE RIGHT EXERCISE

People with regular exercise routines often sleep better and have fewer incidents of insomnia than those who don't get regular physical activity. Exercise promotes sleep and improves sleep quality by altering brain chemistry. Exercising moderately each day, combined with meditation or tai chi in the evening, will not only help you fall and stay asleep, but will also increase the amount of time you spend in R.E.M. sleep.

Exercise in the morning or afternoon, but do not exercise for at least two hours before bed. Do not do vigorous exercise in the evenings.

5. CALMING HERBS

A calming tea before bedtime can ensure a good night's sleep. Drink valerian or passionflower (or passiflora) tea before bedtime every night for one month. Simply steep 1 to 2 tablespoons of the dried herbs in one cup of hot water and drink just before bed.

You can also make a hops pillow (as recommended by the programme 'Grow your own drugs'). For a pillow about 32 x 23 cm you need,-

- 4 handfuls dried hops flowers and 4 handfuls dried lavender flowers (both available online):
- To dry the hops and lavender yourself, tie them in bunches and hang upside down in a well-ventilated space out of direct sunlight for 2 weeks. Alternatively, place in a low oven (about 100C) for 30 minutes or so until dry and crispy. Strip the flowers off the larger or harder stalks.
- Put equal handfuls of dried hops and lavender flowers into a cotton pillowcase, and seal the end.

USE: Place the pillow under or beside your head to induce sleep.

6. A SLEEP-FRIENDLY MEDITATION

Sit comfortably or lie down on your back. Slow your respiration to deep, abdominal breathing. Utter the word "calm" in your mind with every exhalation. Focus on relaxing each area of your body in sequence, from the top of your head to your toes. Starting with the top of your head, inhale and then exhale while visualizing your scalp muscles relaxing. Say "calm" in your mind. Repeat this with each body part as you move down through all body parts, front, back, and sides, in succession: your face, throat, chest, arms, stomach, abdomen, thighs, knees, legs, ankles, until finally you reach your feet. When you've relaxed your feet, visualize all the tension in your body leaving through your toes as dark smoke.

Practice this for at least 15 minutes before bedtime.

7. ACUPUNCTURE HELPS DEEP SLEEP

Acupuncture is particularly effective in treating insomnia. Many people report an immediate improvement in their sleep after treatment. With acupuncture, the sensation of sleep comes easily, lasts without interruption, and is deeper and more refreshing.

If you would like to find out more on how insomnia or how acupuncture can help you, then please book a free 15 minute consultation with:-

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