

SLEEP

Personal Habits

Setting yourself up for sleep

- Fix a bedtime and an awakening time, do not let these times to drift as the body “gets used” to falling asleep at a certain time but only if it is relatively fixed.
- Avoid napping during the day. Late afternoon is often a “sleepy time” for many people, and it is not generally a problem taking a little nap of 30-45 minutes unless you don’t sleep well at night.
- Avoid caffeine and chocolate 4-6 hours before bedtime – it may be that you may need to avoid these for even longer before bed.
- Avoid heavy, spicy, or sugary foods 4-6 hours before bedtime as these can affect your ability to stay asleep.
- Try a light non-sugary snack, before bed – we can often awake at night when blood sugar fluctuates too low. Warm milk (of choice) may be helpful.
- Taking two kiwi fruit before bed is said to induce a peaceful night’s sleep. This may be due to their high vitamin C content that helps support the adrenal glands.
- Try drinking a glass of water before bed and put a pinch of Himalayan or Celtic Sea salt on the tongue. Allow the salt to dissolve on the tongue, not swallowed, and should not be brought into contact with the palate. This has been found to induce an immediate feeling of relaxation and sleep within a few minutes, followed by a sound night’s sleep. It is thought that the salt and water alter the rate of electrical discharge in the brain and therefore induce sleep.
- Exercise regularly, but not right before bed. Regular exercise, particularly in the afternoon, can help deepen sleep. Strenuous exercise within 2 hours before bedtime however can decrease your ability to fall asleep. Try a snack before bed to see if this helps you sleep longer. Play around with different types of snacks with varying amounts of protein and carbohydrate to see which works best for you. This is a temporary measure and won't be needed once your body is more balanced.
- Establish a pre-sleep ritual such as a warm bath or a few minutes reading a relaxing, non-work, non-study related book.
- Practice relaxation techniques before bed to help relieve anxiety and reduce muscle tension such as yoga, Buteyko breathing – slow nose breathing, or listen to the MP3 Guided Breathing track if I have given this to you or ask me for it.
- Don’t take your worries to bed. Leave your worries about job, school, daily life etc behind when you go to bed. Develop meditation or mindfulness techniques to help with this – this becomes easier with practice.

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- Avoid looking at your mobile phone, computer (and TV if possible) for at least one hour before bed. If the brain sees blue light, it thinks it is daytime and does not trigger the production of melatonin, the “sleep hormone”.
- Increase foods with omega 3 as above, which is needed to produce melatonin, the “sleep hormone”
- Avoid waking when it is dark in the morning
- Upon waking, go outside and let your eyes have direct contact with light to reset the circadian rhythm.
- Get into your favourite sleeping position. If you don't fall asleep within 15-30 minutes, try getting up, go into another room and read until sleepy.

Sleeping Environment

- Turn off phone and all electrical equipment in the room (see EMF section later for info)
- Reserve your bed for sleep only. Do not use the bed as an office, workroom, or recreation room. Let your body “know” that the bed is associated with sleeping.
- Make sure the room is totally dark. Block out all distracting noise and eliminate as much light as possible.
- Use comfortable bedding. Uncomfortable bedding can prevent good sleep. Evaluate whether or not whether this may be part of the source of your problem and make appropriate changes.
- Avoid sugary snacks or alcohol close to bedtime as after a high rise in blood sugar, it may then fall low in the night and wake you up – you can have a healthy snack at night if this happens.
- Make sure your room is cool, not cold, as we only sleep when our temperature goes down.
- Breathing exercises before sleep or if you awake. We cannot sleep if adrenaline is high, and relaxed breathing brings this back down.
- There is a positive association between Vitamin D and sleep quality. It is usually a good idea to check your vitamin D levels in September to make sure your levels are enough for Winter as levels can halve between September and April.

Getting up in the middle of the night

Most people wake up one or two times a night for various reasons. If you find that you get up in the middle of the night and get back to sleep within 15-20 minutes, then do not remain in the bed “trying hard” to sleep. Get out of bed. Leave the bedroom. Read, have a light snack, do some quiet activity, or take a bath. You will generally find that you can get back to sleep 20 minutes or so later. Do not perform challenging or engaging activity such as office work, housework etc. DO not watch television or go on to a computer.

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Television

Many people fall asleep with the television on in their room. Watching television before bedtime is often a bad idea. Television is a very engaging medium that tends to keep people up. The general recommendation is that the television is not in the bedroom. At the appropriate bedtime, the TV should be turned off and we should go to bed. Too much light at the end of the day can keep you awake – this includes computers and phones. Some people find that the radio helps them go to sleep. Since radio is a less engaging medium than TV, with no light, this might be a better option.

Electrical Equipment and Electromagnetic Frequency (EMF) & Toxins

For some people, electrical equipment and EMF can contribute to sleep problem, as can toxins in the room. Have a think about how you can detox your room: -

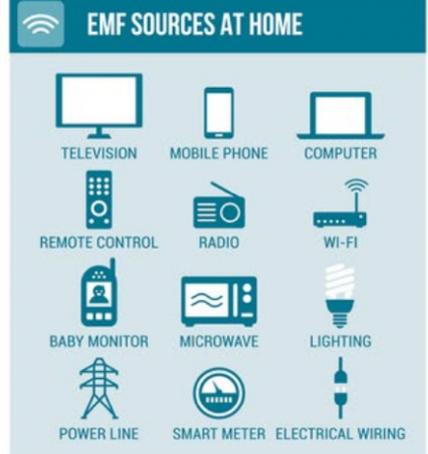
- Turn off all electrical equipment especially mobile phone, electric alarm clocks, electric blankets, anything on standby mode.
- If sheets are not 100% organic cotton, the room has recently bene painted, new furniture, carpets, curtains, wallpaper, consider a couple of house plants in the bedroom to help remove the toxins – see House Plant Fact sheet on the website. Different plants can remove different toxins.
- If you do have to re-paint, or re-decorate your room, consider the toxins that are given off. There are no toxin free paints, but some are less toxic. However, consider how these might affect your sleep, and health.
- Remove all artificial fragrance, perfumes, candles, reed diffusers etc.
- See image on next page for more information

Cont...

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ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELDS

EMF PROTECTION



HEALTH RISKS



- ANXIETY
- DEPRESSION
- STRESS/FATIGUE



- HEART PROBLEMS



- LEUKEMIA
- CANCER

HOW TO REDUCE EXPOSURE



Metaphysical Reasons for Insomnia

“Psychological studies have proven that insomniacs are generally emotional, and anxiety ridden. If you suffer from frequent insomnia, your sleeplessness probably reflects restlessness in your waking life. You are trying to stay awake so that you will resolve the issues that are preoccupying you. Once you understand that sleep brings comfort and solutions, you will find you are determined to settle the unrest in your life.” From “Your Body’s Telling You: Love Yourself!” by Lise Bourbeau

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Other Factors

Physical factors are also known to upset sleep including arthritis, shingles, acid reflux, heartburn, menstruation, headaches, hot flashes etc.

Psychological and mental health problems such as depression anxiety and stress are often associated with sleeping difficulty. In many cases, difficulty staying asleep may be the only presenting sign of depression.

Many medications can cause sleeplessness as a side effect.

Mouth-breathing, snoring and sleep apnoea will affect quality of sleep – they turn on the sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight). Sleep apnoea needs to be addressed by a sleep clinic and if not dealt with can result in diabetes, high blood pressure etc. Buteyko Breathing along with dietary and lifestyle changes can be helpful in supporting these.

Other Support

Dietary and lifestyle changes can have a huge impact on sleep quality. If sleep problems are chronic, then one may need to really have a think about addressing lifestyle and potentially your job or career. For instance, any job that involves shift work or night work such as air stewards for example may eventually over time struggle more than others with their health depending on what else is going on. Research found that Two nights of sleep restriction to 4 hours per night can result in a 40% reduction in glucose tolerance and a 30% increase in a desire for calorie dense foods such as cake and potatoes. One night of deprived sleep can equate to the equivalent of 6 months on a junk food diet.

In turn, the better you are able to sleep, the more balanced your blood sugar and your minerals will be. Balancing blood sugar and reducing anxiety can have a big impact on positive sleep quality. Sometimes I may suggest supplements to help with sleep until you get back on track.

Naturopathic Hydrotherapy Therapeutics for sleep

Cold Water Foot Wash

This is exactly as it sounds; wash your feet with cold water before bed – about 10-30 seconds on each foot. Don't dry them but go straight to bed. This helps to draw the energy down to the feet and take it away from the head, so is particularly useful for an active mind when you go to bed.

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Cold Wet Cotton Socks

Wet some cotton socks in cold water and put them on and then cover them with some dry wool socks. This also helps to draw the energy down towards the feet and helps to aid sleep by reducing over-active thought processes.

Ayurvedic Techniques

It is important to calm the mind before bed. An active mind with many thoughts is a sign of disturbed Vata in Ayurveda medicine. To pacify Vata, massage and breathing are suggested. Self-massage (especially the feet) before bed with warm sesame seed oil, almond oil or coconut oil, together with breathing exercises helps to balance this energy in the body. The oil can be applied before a bath and then washed off or left on all night.

Alternate Nostril Breath

- Breathe in through the left nostril, closing the right with the thumb, to the count of four.
- Hold the breath, closing both nostrils, to the count of eight or less if uncomfortable.
- Breathe through the right nostril, closing the left with the ring and little fingers, to the count of six.
- Breathe in through the right nostril, keeping the left nostril closed with the ring and little fingers to the count of 4.
- Hold the breath, closing both nostrils, to the count of eight (or less if uncomfortable)
- This constitutes one round.
- Do 5 rounds in all

Books

- “I can make You Sleep” by Paul McKenna – comes with a hypnosis download code that re-sets your body's natural sleep mechanism so that you will automatically find it easier to get deep restful sleep and have energy to achieve what you want and improve your overall quality of your life.
- “The Effortless Sleep Method” by Sasha Stephens – also her website <http://www.sashastephens.com/>
- “Why We Sleep” by Matthew Walker