

Your Sleep Hygiene Guide



Your Sleep-More-Soundly Guide

These practices should be a priority because a good night's sleep supports your overall health and immunity, helps manage your weight (sleeping difficulties are linked with obesity), and encourages you to make more healthy food and lifestyle choices.

How Sleep Works

We have a tiny pea-sized glandule in the middle of our brain called the pineal gland. It works according to the [circadian rhythm](#) – our natural 24-hour sleep/wake cycle – and is inactive during the day. As darkness falls it begins to secrete the hormone melatonin.

Melatonin is extremely important to our wellbeing and it helps to calm the brain and counters the stress hormone cortisol. It usually begins producing around 9 pm and makes you feel more chilled out and relaxed as it prepares you for sleep. For ideal sleep, melatonin levels should rise and cortisol levels should lower until daylight when the pineal gland becomes inactive again, and waking cortisol is produced.

However, sleep may be prevented or interrupted if you're exposed to bright light at night and the release of melatonin is inhibited, if you're in a noisy environment which causes cortisol to elevate or if you've eaten a heavy meal and your digestion is actively working to process it.

The good news is that by making some more small changes you can improve your sleeping story:

7 Simple Sleep Tips

1. Have your last meal at least three hours before bed and don't snack. My functional medicine mentor says this one surprises many people as they don't realise the digestive process can impact sleep. If you have full-blown insomnia this could be your secret weapon.
2. Say no to caffeine after 2 pm. This includes coffee and tea (even green tea), cola and chocolate. Caffeine can stay in your system for many hours after you've imbibed it.
3. Leave your worries behind. If you can, leave the brain work for daylight hours: ban next-day-planning, balancing the budget and talking about difficult things in the evenings.
4. Relax. Choose to embrace calm and read a book, take a bath, pat your pet, fold the laundry.
5. Ditch the bright lights. Use soft lighting and get off your screens – no texting, no emails, no apps, no TV, no Netflix for 1-2 hours before bed.
6. Create calm. Infuse an aromatherapy diffuser with high quality relaxing oils like lavender, neroli, and basil. Clary Sage is an excellent choice for women going through menopause. You can make up blends also.
7. Herbal teas like chamomile, lavender, lemon balm, and valerian root help to set the stage for sleep as does an Epsom salts bath. The warm water and the natural magnesium in the Epsom salts are both calming and relaxing. You can boost these qualities by adding a few drops of your relaxing essential oils.

Sweet Dreams

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