

Guide to a Good Night's Sleep

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If you are having sleep problems, whether you are not able to fall asleep, wake up too often, don't feel well-rested when you wake up in the morning, or simply want to improve the quality and quantity of your sleep, try as many of the following techniques below as possible:

- **My current favorite for insomnia is [Emotional Freedom Technique \(EFT\)](#).** Most people can learn this gentle tapping technique in several minutes. EFT can help balance your body's bioenergetic system and resolve some of the emotional stresses that are contributing to the insomnia at a very deep level. The results are typically long lasting and the improvement is remarkably rapid.
- **Avoid before-bed snacks, particularly grains and sugars.** This will raise blood sugar and inhibit sleep. Later, when blood sugar drops too low (hypoglycemia), you might wake up and not be able to fall back asleep.
- **Sleep in complete darkness or as close as possible.** When light hits the eyes, it disrupts the circadian rhythm of the pineal gland and production of melatonin and serotonin. There also should be as little light in the bathroom as possible if you get up in the middle of the night.
- **No TV right before bed.** Even better, get the TV out of the bedroom or even out of the house, completely. It is too stimulating to the brain and it will take longer to fall asleep. Also disruptive of pineal gland function for the same reason as above.
- **Wear socks to bed.** Due to the fact that they have the poorest circulation, the feet often feel cold before the rest of the body.
- **Read something spiritual or religious.** This will help to relax. Don't read anything stimulating, such as a mystery or suspense novel, as this may have the opposite effect. In addition, if you are really enjoying a suspenseful book, you might wind up unintentionally reading for hours, instead of going to sleep.
- **Avoid using loud alarm clocks.** It is very stressful on the body to be awoken suddenly. If you are regularly getting enough sleep, they should be unnecessary. I gave up my alarm clock five years ago and use a dawn simulator which works by with an alarm to a dimmer switch that gradually turns the light on to full intensity over 45 minutes. I just love it as it is so gentle and if I need more sleep, I get it without being startled or disrupting my adrenals. Almost like a real dawn.
- **Journaling.** If you often lay in bed with your mind racing, it might be helpful keep a journal and write down your thoughts before bed. Personally, I have been doing this for 15 years, but prefer to do it in the morning when my brain is functioning at its peak and my cortisol levels are high
- **Melatonin and its precursors.** If behavioral changes do not work, it may be possible to improve sleep by supplementing with the hormone melatonin. However, I would exercise extreme caution in using it, and only as a last resort, as it is a powerful hormone. Ideally it is best to increase levels naturally with exposure to bright sunlight in the daytime (along with full spectrum fluorescent bulbs in the winter) and absolute complete darkness at night. One should get blackout drapes so no light is coming in from the outside. One can also use one of melatonin's precursors, L-tryptophan or 5-hydroxytryptophan (5-HTP). L-tryptophan is the safest and my preference, but must be obtained by prescription only. However, don't be afraid or intimidated by its prescription status. It is just a simple amino acid.
- **Get to bed as early as possible.** Our systems, particularly the adrenals, do a majority of their recharging or recovering during the hours of 11PM and 1AM. In addition, your gallbladder dumps toxins during this same period. If you are awake, the toxins back up into the liver which then secondarily back up into your entire system and cause further disruption of your health. Prior to the widespread use of electricity, people would go to bed shortly after sundown, as most animals do, and which nature intended for humans as well.

- **Check your bedroom for electro-magnetic fields (EMFs).** These can disrupt the pineal gland and the production of melatonin and serotonin, and may have other negative effects as well. To purchase a gauss meter to measure EMFs try Cutcat at 800-497-9516. They have a model for around \$40. One doctor even recommends that people pull their circuit breaker before bed to kill all power in the house (Dr. Herbert Ross, author of "Sleep Disorders").
- **Keep the temperature in the bedroom no higher than 70°.** Many people keep their homes and particularly the upstairs bedrooms too hot.
- **Eat a high-protein snack several hours before bed.** This can provide the L-tryptophan need to produce melatonin and serotonin.
- Also eat a small piece of fruit. This can help the tryptophan cross the blood-brain barrier.
- **Reduce or avoid as many drugs as possible.** Many medications, both prescription and over-the-counter may have effects on sleep. In most cases, the condition, which caused the drugs to be taken in the first place, can be addressed by following the guidelines elsewhere on this web site.
- **Avoid caffeine.** A recent study showed that in some people, caffeine is not metabolized efficiently and therefore they can feel the effects long after consuming it. So an afternoon cup of coffee (or even tea) will keep some people from falling asleep. Also, some medications, particularly diet pills contain caffeine.
- **Alarm clocks and other electrical devices.** If these devices must be used, keep them as far away from the bed as possible, preferably at least 3 feet.
- **Avoid alcohol.** Although alcohol will make people drowsy, the effect is short lived and people will often wake up several hours later, unable to fall back asleep. Alcohol will also keep you from falling into the deeper stages of sleep, where the body does most of its healing.
- **Lose weight.** Being overweight can increase the risk of sleep apnea, which will prevent a restful night's sleep.
- **Avoid foods that you may be sensitive to.** This is particularly true for dairy and wheat products, as they may have effect on sleep, such as causing apnea, excess congestion, gastrointestinal upset, and gas, among others.
- **Don't drink any fluids within 2 hours of going to bed.** This will reduce the likelihood of needing to get up and go to the bathroom or at least minimize the frequency.
- **Take a hot bath, shower or sauna before bed.** When body temperature is raised in the late evening, it will fall at bedtime, facilitating sleep,
- **Remove the clock from view.** It will only add to your worry when constantly staring at it... 2 AM...3 AM... 4:30 AM...
- **Keep Your Bed For Sleeping.** If you are used to watching TV or doing work in bed, you may find it harder to relax and to think of the bed as a place to sleep.
- **Have your adrenals checked by a good natural medicine clinician.** Scientists have found that [Insomnia may be caused by adrenal stress](#) (Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism, August 2001; 86:3787-3794)
- **If you are menopausal or perimenopausal, get checked out by a good natural medicine physician.** The hormonal changes at this time may cause problems if not properly addressed