

Medifit Education's

SLEEP SOUNDLY



25 Proven Natural Techniques

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e - Book



| Sleep benefits | Sleep schedule | Bedtime routine | Sleep environment | Mattress and pillows |
Cool bedroom | No caffeine nicotine | Meditation | No heavy meals | Relaxation techniques |
Regular exercise | Limited naps | Sunlight exposure | PMR - Progressive Muscle Relaxation
| Earplugs use | No stimulating activities | Shower before bed | Sleep mask | Aromatherapy |
No alcohol | Melatonin supplement | Massage | Sleep yoga | No screens | Sleep ritual |

A concise book to get sound sleep naturally

Dr Mahesh Kumar

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Medifit Educations

Sleep Soundly

25 Proven Natural Techniques

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Sleep Basics – Definition, Need & BENEFITS

Sleep

You spend about one-third of your life sleeping, but it's still something many struggle with. Researchers and experts also struggle with it because of the mysteries surrounding how and why we sleep and what happens to us while we do. Fortunately, advances in medical science are helping people find ways to get the sleep they need.

What is sleep?

Sleep is a normal body process that allows your body and brain to rest. At first glance, sleep is deceptively simple. For most people, it's just a matter of getting comfortable, closing your eyes and drifting into slumber. But despite how simple it seems, sleep is one of the most complex and mysterious body processes known to science.

Sleep is a state of reduced mental and physical activity in which consciousness is altered and certain sensory activity is inhibited. During sleep, there is a marked decrease in muscle activity and interactions with the surrounding environment. While sleep differs from wakefulness in terms of the ability to react to stimuli, it still involves active brain patterns, making it more reactive than a coma or disorders of consciousness.

Anabolic State

During sleep, most of the body's systems are in an anabolic state, helping to restore the immune, nervous, skeletal, and muscular systems; these are vital processes that maintain mood, memory, and cognitive function, and play a large role in the function of the endocrine and immune systems. The internal circadian clock promotes sleep daily at night. The diverse purposes and mechanisms of sleep are the subject of substantial ongoing research. Sleep is a highly conserved behavior across animal evolution, likely going back hundreds of millions of years.

Why Getting Enough Sleep Is Important?

Sleep is an essential function that allows your body and mind to recharge, leaving you refreshed and alert when you wake up. Healthy sleep also helps the body remain healthy and stave off diseases. Without enough sleep, the brain cannot function properly, impairing your abilities to concentrate, think clearly, and process memories.

Sleep serves a variety of important physical and psychological functions, including:

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Learning and memory consolidation: Sleep helps with focus and concentration—and it allows the brain to register and organize memories—all of which are vital to learning.

Emotional regulation: Sleep helps people regulate their emotions

Judgment and decision making: Sleep influences a person's ability to recognize danger and threats.

Healthy sleep supports sound judgment, good decision making, and other executive functions.

Problem solving: Research shows that "sleeping on" a complex problem improves a person's chance of solving it.

Energy conservation: Sleep allows people to conserve energy through an extended period of reduced activity.

Growth and healing: Sleep provides the release of growth hormone necessary for the body's tissues to grow and repair damage.

Immunity: Sleep supports immune function, allowing the body to fight off diseases and infections.

Sleep Need:

Newborns (0–3 months)

14 to 17 hours

Infants (4–11 months)

12 to 15 hours

Toddlers (1–2 years)

11 to 14 hours

Preschoolers (3–4 years)

10 to 13 hours

School-age children (5–12 years)

9 to 11 hours

Teenagers (13–17 years)

8 to 10 hours

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Adults (18–64 years)

7 to 9 hours

Older Adults (65 years and over)

7 to 8 hours

8 Health Benefits of Sleep

1. Improved Mood
2. Healthy Heart
3. Regulated Blood Sugar
4. Improved Mental Function
5. Restored Immune System
6. Stress Relief
7. Athletic Performance
8. Maintaining Healthy Weight

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A CONSISTENT SLEEP SCHEDULE

Positive Effects of a Regular Sleep Schedule

Having a regular sleep schedule can positively affect key areas in your life including your mental and physical health as well as performance. Getting enough sleep from a regular sleep schedule can make it easier for you to cope with daily stress and less likely to be impacted by minor negative things that can come up. Other positive benefits of a regular sleep schedule include alertness, health and safety behaviors, and improved heart health.

How Do I Set a Sleep Schedule?

If those positive health effects sound good to you (and they should!), you might be asking how you can take steps to have a more consistent sleep schedule. We recommend three steps that can specifically help you set and stick with a sleep schedule.

Prioritize your sleep

Sleep tends to be the first thing that gets sacrificed when life gets busy with work, school, or family commitments. When you value your sleep, maintaining a consistent sleep schedule can come more easily. The first step is to understand the benefits of getting enough quality sleep. By prioritizing sleep in your life, you're setting yourself up to get enough sleep to help feel great and be at your best.

Use bedtime reminders and wake-up alarms

When it gets closer to your normal bedtime, use a reminder that alerts you it's time to start your personal routine to get ready for sleep. In the morning, a wake-up alarm can help you get your day started without the worry of oversleeping.

Keep to your wind-down routine

Looking for something to help you fall asleep easier? A wind-down routine is a simple plan to let your mind and body prepare for sleep every night. Each person's approach is different but could include relaxing activities like reading a book, meditating, journaling, or listening to calming music before bed. Staying consistent night after night leads to the best results.

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CREATING PERFECT BEDTIME ROUTINE

How to create the perfect bedtime routine

Pick up a book

Reading before bed is a very good method to help drift off. It is best to pick a space away from bed to read, so the bed doesn't become associated with reading and it is best to pick a reading choice for pleasure- not work related reading.

Have a stretch

Gentle stretched before sleeping can help destress and improve moods. This can help the body settle before getting into bed. These exercises should be light and low impact, like head roll, bear hugs and seated butterfly.

Listen to music

Music triggers a dopamine response similar to food, exercise and sex. These give our bodies a positive feeling and can decrease the levels of the stress hormone, cortisol.

Dim the lights

Too much light exposure before bed can dramatically affect the quality of your sleep. Try switching the bulbs in bedrooms to a warmer yellow hue or opt for a side lamp instead of the main light.

Sip a warm drink

Herbal teas and warm milk are a popular choice to help people doze off. However, cherry juice and coconut water are also popular as they promote muscle relaxation.

Just make sure the drink is caffeine free.

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Write down thoughts

The mind is often still active after a busy day and this can often stop people from drifting off to sleep. Writing thoughts down on paper can help to clear the mind before bed and can be referred back to the next day.

Limit caffeine consumption

Limiting caffeine consumption is important as the half-life of caffeine can last up to several hours. Coffee lovers should try and keep their drinking of it towards the beginning of the day and ease off in the early afternoon.

Put the phone down

Phones and devices emit a sensitive blue light that can inhibit the ability to sleep if used too close to bedtime. Most devices have a night time function that will give the screen an orange tone which can be utilised to help drift off easier.

Choose a scent

Lighting a candle or diffusing an essential oil as a form of pre-bed aromatherapy can help induce a calm state in the room. Lavender has long been associated with creating a soothing atmosphere as well as vanilla and jasmine.

Take a bath or shower

Taking a warm bath or shower can help aid a better night's sleep as it helps to regulate the body's natural internal temperature. Not only this but there are links between this warm water exposure and lowered blood pressure. The steam can also help nasal congestion if you have a cold, allowing for an easier rest.

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OPTIMIZE YOUR SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

Bedroom Elements That Affect Sleep Quality

Science shows us that a bad sleep environment can result in sleep deprivation and sleep disorders, which can ultimately lead to health complications like obesity, diabetes, hypertension, stroke, and mortality. The environmental conditions that affect the quality of sleep include:

- 1. Sleeping temperature**
- 2. Noise**
- 3. Lights**
- 4. Mattress and bedding quality**
- 5. Wall and furniture colors**
- 6. Clutter in the room**
- 7. Scents in the bedroom**
- 8. Air quality**
- 9. Electronics**

1. The ideal sleeping temperature

The temperature of the sleeping area can affect your quality of sleep. A bedroom that is too hot or cold will not allow you to fall asleep, stay asleep, and wake up feeling refreshed.

Adjust your heating or cooling to find a temperature that works best for you. The best temperature for sleep is between 60-67 degrees Fahrenheit (15.6-19 degrees Celsius). If you don't have air conditioning, you can leave the window open to allow the fresh air to cool the sleeping area.

2. Noise in the bedroom

An ideal sleeping environment doesn't have any noise at all. Noise in the sleeping area can come from the outdoors, the street, your neighbors, or even inside the house. You should consider whether there is any noise that's affecting your quality of sleep and find an appropriate solution.

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Noise can be manageable by using earplugs or setting up a white noise machine. If it's possible, you may even consider changing the location of your bedroom if that will help to minimize noise.

3. Lights in the sleep environment

The reason you should avoid lights is related to the circadian rhythm, your body's internal 24-hour clock that manages sleep and wakefulness, and the circadian rhythm's biggest influence is light. When it's light out, this tells the body it's time to be awake and alert. Conversely, darkness tells your body it's time for sleep, so if your bedroom is as dark as possible, this will help foster sleep.

4. Mattress and bedding quality

The ideal sleep environment requires good bedding and a quality mattress because it can make it easier to fall asleep at night. You may struggle to find a comfortable position if the mattress is too soft or firm for your weight and preferred sleeping positions. The quality of the mattress should be consistent with your weight, or the mattress will be uncomfortable. Depending on what you find the most comfortable, you can choose between memory foam, latex, or spring mattresses. It's important to consider your sleeping position when choosing the right mattress because what works for side sleepers may not be the best for people sleeping on their backs.

5. Colors in the bedroom

An ideal bedroom environment should have calming colors to reduce the stress that can prevent you from falling asleep. According to science, blue helps lower blood pressure while green promotes calmness. While you may love the idea of covering your bedroom walls in red paint, this color is known to trigger the body's flight-or-fight response and stimulate the mind, which makes it more difficult to fall asleep.

6. Clutter in the bedroom

Clutter in the environment will make it difficult for you to sleep. It's best to remove all the clutter from your bedroom because it can cause stress and anxiety that disrupt your sleep. Clutter can consist of clothes, toys, books, or personal items. Not only will clutter make it difficult for you to fall asleep at night, but it can also increase stress in your life.

Think about what items don't belong in the bedroom. The only things that should be on your nightstand are the items you use before bed, such as a book or alarm clock.

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The rest you can store somewhere else to create a calm and relaxing sleeping environment. Try to find a place for every item so that the environment in your bedroom is more suitable for sleeping.

7. Scents in the bedroom

The right scent can help you fall asleep faster, but a bad smell can keep you up. Bad smells can make it difficult to fall asleep, so it's important to know how scents can affect sleep. Citrus scents and heavy perfumes can irritate you and keep you up without you even realizing it. Some scents may even give you a headache or make you nauseous if you spend too much time in the room. A bad smell in the room can wake you up at some point during the night.

The best smell for sleeping is lavender because it has calming effects that help you sleep. The scent of lavender reduces your stress hormones, helping you calm down and relax before bedtime. You can buy an essential oil diffuser or place dried lavender in the room to create a calming and soothing sleeping environment. Chamomile and peppermint oils are good choices if you don't have lavender. Both can help you relax and sleep better.

8. Air quality of the sleep environment

The cleanliness of your room is important because dust and other particles in the air can irritate you when trying to fall asleep. The quality of the air outside is crucial if you leave the window open while sleeping. If it's bad, it can result in dust and smoke entering from the outside.

The best thing you can do for better sleep conditions in your bedroom is clean it regularly. Vacuum any dust in the room and remove loose dirt by using a damp cloth to wipe down objects in the room. You should replace or wash your bedding weekly or every two weeks. Ventilate the room regularly to allow fresh air in, control the humidity, and change your AC filter regularly.

9. Electronics in the Sleeping Environment

You should keep electronics in the sleeping environment to a minimum if you want better sleep. All electronics should be off at least one hour before bedtime. TV, computers, cell phones, and even alarm clocks can all interfere with your sleep by giving off light that keeps you up. Light from these devices simulates sunlight, which keeps you up at night by indicating to your brain that it is daytime.

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COMFORTABLE MATTRESS AND PILLOWS

How Your Bedding Can Affect Your Sleep

Quality sleep is an important part of overall health. In fact, a lack of sleep can contribute to a number of serious health conditions, including (but not limited to) type 2 diabetes, heart disease and increased risk of stroke and mood disorders, such as anxiety and depression, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Unfortunately, many U.S. adults log less than seven hours of sleep each night. For instance, CDC data from 2020 reveals nearly 30% of adults in Colorado don't get enough quality sleep, and almost 43% of adults in West Virginia aren't sleeping enough, either.

While sleep deprivation is a prevalent issue, there are a number of solutions available to many tired adults, including tending to the space in which you snooze. Your bedding and overall sleep environment can have a direct impact on both how long and how well you sleep each night. Read on to learn about some easy-to-implement changes you can make to your sleep hygiene that can boost how much quality rest you get each night.

Why Your Bedding Matters for Quality Sleep

Healthy sleep habits, often referred to as "sleep hygiene" by experts, are routines and practices you can use to not only drift off to sleep faster, but also stay asleep for longer. The state of your bedding is an important part of sleep hygiene. Your mattress, sheets and pillows can help ensure—or prevent—a good night's rest.

"One's mattress is responsible for proper back alignment, pressure relief, temperature regulation and even pain alleviation," says Po-Chang Hsu, M.D., a medical expert at SleepingOcean in Boston. "[Meanwhile], an unsuitable mattress can cause discomfort, nighttime awakenings, back pain, headaches and more."

A 2015 systematic review of 24 controlled trials of mattresses and sleep quality found a medium-firm mattress with adjustable inflation tends to be best for sleep comfort and quality. The Sleep Foundation notes, however, that the quality mattress (and the sleep quality it promotes) ultimately comes down to personal preference. Your sleep position, preference for a soft or firm surface and your temperature while you rest can all influence what makes the most comfortable mattress for you.

Pillow, Sheets & Fabrics

Your pillow can affect your sleep as much as your mattress. In fact, Dr. Hsu notes that the right pillow can prevent neck pain and shoulder stiffness. **"A good pillow supports one's head and neck, enforcing a healthy spinal alignment during sleep,"** he says.

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Sheets are another important factor in sleep hygiene, as your sheets can influence how your body temperature fluctuates throughout the night. "I encourage patients to buy sheets and pillowcases that breathe well so they don't wake up from overheating," says Danielle Kelvas, M.D., a Chattanooga, Tennessee-based physician and chief medical advisor at Sleepline.

Fabrics that breathe well and may contribute to sleep comfort include natural fibers like cotton and linen. Fabric choice, too, is a matter of personal preference and can often depend on the seasonal temperatures where you live. With that said, bed sheets and sleepwear made of cotton or bamboo typically keep sleepers warm enough but not too warm, thanks to their breathability.

Weighted blankets are a popular bedroom addition for improving sleep quality as well. In fact, research suggests weighted blankets can have a positive effect on the time it takes a person to fall asleep, their ability to sleep soundly and even their ability to relax during the day. While more studies are needed, it may be worth considering a weighted blanket for the cozy space in your home.

Bed sheets, pillows and blankets can also become breeding grounds for allergens, which is why washing these linens regularly is a critical component of maintaining a restful sleep space. What's more, proper cleaning of these bedding elements extends beyond the wash cycle and into the dryer, according to Dr. Kelvas. "It's important to put your pillows in the dryer on high heat for a few minutes at least once a month, as the [heat] kills mites, which can worsen congestion and allergies," she says.

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COOL, DARK, AND QUIET BEDROOM

How To Make Your Room Dark

Cover Windows

Light from the sun and moon, as well as security lights or street lights, can enter the bedroom through windows. If your blinds or curtains do not block outside light sufficiently, you might consider investing in blackout curtains. Covering the window with aluminum foil is a low-cost alternative that also blocks outdoor light.

Mind the Gap

The gap between the door and the floor is another potential source of light at night. Turn off hallway lights before going to bed, or place a rolled-up towel against your door gap to block light from entering.

Wear an Eye Mask

If it's not possible to block light from entering your room, or if you prefer not to, wearing an eye mask might help. Keep in mind that you need to keep the eye mask on throughout the night in order for it to be effective in preventing your exposure to light. Research suggests that light penetrates the eyelids and, in doing so, inhibits melatonin production.

Stow Away Electronics

Although the temptation to use them might be strong, it's best to put your cell phone, laptop, and tablet away at least 30 minutes before bed to promote quality sleep. The use of electronic devices before bed is associated with increased sleep issues and poorer quality sleep. Take a look around your bedroom environment to identify all sources of light, such as digital clocks, charging stations, and other electronics. Cover up these lights, or store them outside the bedroom.

Dim the Lights

Research has shown that being in a fully lit room prior to going to sleep results in delayed and shortened production of melatonin compared to dim lighting. Try switching from bright overhead lights to dim ambient lighting in your home during the hours leading up to bedtime.

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NO CAFFEINE AND NICOTINE BEFORE BEDTIME

How Long Before Bed Should You Stop Drinking Caffeine?

On average, most people should stop drinking caffeine four to six hours before bed. People who are especially sensitive to this stimulant may want to stop earlier in the day or avoid caffeine altogether.

Figuring out how long before bed you should stop drinking caffeine may take some trial and error. If, for example, you moved your last cup of coffee up to 4 p.m. but you are still having restless nights, you may need to push that up even more (or switch to decaffeinated).

This article discusses when to stop drinking caffeine before bed. It also explains how caffeine works to promote wakefulness and how caffeine can hinder your ability to

How Caffeine Impacts Sleep

Good sleep occurs when it is properly timed to take advantage of both the body's circadian rhythm and sleep drive. For most people, this means spending a prolonged period awake during the day (typically lasting about 16 hours) and attempting to sleep at night.

Sleep drive, in particular, may be affected by caffeine use.

The sleep drive is understood as the desire for sleep. It builds gradually with wakefulness due to the accumulation of a chemical called adenosine in the brain.

Adenosine is a byproduct of metabolism. The longer you stay awake, the more it accumulates and the sleepier you gradually become.

Caffeine directly blocks adenosine. This, in effect, reduces sleepiness and may contribute to difficulty falling or staying asleep after it is consumed.

When to Stop Caffeine For the Day

For most people, caffeine should be avoided for four to six hours before bedtime. This is how long it takes the body to metabolize half of its (caffeine) consumption.

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But the amount of time that is right for you is highly variable and depends on a few factors:

- Your individual levels of adenosine
- Your ability to clear caffeine
- Whether or not you have an underlying tendency toward insomnia

If you are highly sensitive to the stimulant, you might consider cutting it out after lunch or switching to decaffeinated drinks.

Sleep Better Without Nicotine

Want to know what's keeping you up when you should be sleeping? It might not be the caffeine after all. Studies find that nicotine disrupts those restful zzzs.

Nicotine is in tobacco products like cigarettes, e-cigarettes and other vaping products like JUUL, smokeless tobacco and all other forms of tobacco including hookah and cigars. If you use one of these products, you may not be sleeping as well as you could for the following reasons:

You might be thinking – 'it sounds like even after I quit, my sleep won't get better right away?' It's true that when quitting tobacco, withdrawal symptoms include restless sleep while your body gets used to functioning without nicotine. BUT there are remedies that can help and you'll be rewarded with a lifetime of sleep that's not disrupted by nicotine.

Another reason it's worth pushing through the withdrawal period: studies show that disturbed sleep can lead to depression, weight gain and substance misuse.

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SLEEP PROMOTING MEDITATION

How can meditation help with sleep?

When you meditate, a variety of physiological changes occur. These changes initiate sleep by influencing specific processes in your body.

For example, in a 2015 study published in JAMA Internal Medicine^{Trusted Source}, researchers analyzed how mindfulness meditation affected 49 adults with moderate sleep issues. The participants were randomly assigned 6 weeks of meditation or sleep hygiene education. At the end of the study, the meditation group experienced fewer insomnia symptoms and less daytime fatigue.

According to the researchers, meditation likely helps in several ways. Sleep problems often stem from stress and worry, but meditation improves your relaxation response. It also improves control of the autonomic nervous system, which reduces how easily you're awakened.

Meditation may also:

- increase melatonin (the sleep hormone)
- increase serotonin (precursor of melatonin)
- reduce heart rate
- decrease blood pressure
- activate parts of the brain that control sleep

Your body experiences similar changes in the early stages of sleep. As a result, meditation can promote sleep by initiating these changes.

A 20-Minute Meditation for Easing Into Sleep

The more you try to force sleep, the less likely you are to achieve it. Explore this guided meditation to let go of stubborn thoughts and get a full night's rest.

Since staying awake while we're meditating is often a big challenge, it's no surprise that mindfulness has been shown to promote healthy sleep. It's not all that exciting to sit quietly and breathe. It can be downright calming. But that's not the whole story.

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Mindfulness practice encourages nonjudgmental awareness—seeing things exactly as they are, with openness and curiosity. With sleep, as with meditation practice, intentions are easier said than done.

Neither sleep routines nor mindfulness practice responds well to a heavy hand. If you set out to force yourself into sleep, you're less likely to sleep. If you strain for some picture-perfect mindset when meditating, you'll create more stress and uncertainty. If you set yourself up with clear-sighted planning and patient resolve—intentionally but unforced—sleep and mindfulness are both more likely to follow.

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NO HEAVY MEALS BEFORE BEDTIME

Poor Quality Sleep

Eating too much close to bedtime can affect sleep quality. Research shows that eating high-calorie meals with large amounts of fat or carbohydrates less than an hour before bedtime can extend the time it takes to fall asleep. By contrast, eating meals high in carbohydrates at least four hours before bedtime can decrease the time spent awake in bed before sleeping.

Eating right before bed can also make a person wake up in the middle of the night

One study found that participants who ate or drank less than an hour before going to bed were much more likely to wake up after falling asleep than people who consumed something two or more hours before bedtime.

Eating before bed and sleep quality

If you regularly eat close to bedtime and have trouble getting a good night's sleep, it's definitely worth considering whether there's a connection there.

The main concern actually goes right back to acid reflux and indigestion, which can make it hard to fall asleep, Dr. Gabbard points out, as can simply feeling too full. But GERD and indigestion can also make it harder to stay asleep, Rajkumar Dasgupta, M.D., a clinician and associate professor at Keck Medicine of USC's division of pulmonary, critical care, and sleep medicine, tells SELF. Both issues can cause small arousals that you might not remember, but can prevent you from getting into deeper phases of sleep and leaving you under-rested and groggy in the morning, Dr. Dasgupta says.

At the same time, if you're not having any issues with sleeping (or reflux or indigestion), there's really no reason to change up your nighttime eating habits. In fact a solid bedtime routine can help signal to your body and mind—which have been going all day—that it's time to slow down and rest now, Dr. Dasgupta says. And just as with drinking tea, taking a bath, or reading a book, enjoying a snack may help you unwind and prepare for a good night's sleep. Plus lying there with a rumbling tummy can occupy your mind and make it hard for your body to relax, Dr. Dasgupta says. So if you need a bedtime snack to stave off late-night hunger, then go for it.

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Also keep in mind that there are approximately 7,000 things that can affect your ability to fall and stay asleep besides nighttime eating—caffeine intake, exercise, sleep habits, anxiety, sleep disorders. So instead of jumping to any conclusions, Dr. Dasgupta recommends keeping a sleep journal tracking all of these things for a couple weeks to see if there's any correlation. If you notice that you consistently get less sleep or feel less well-rested in the morning after eating right before bed, then try shrinking or skipping your bedtime snack and see what happens.

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RELAXATION TECHNIQUES - DEEP BREATHING

Breathing Techniques for Sleep

If you're having trouble sleeping, try one of these breathing techniques:

4-7-8 Breathing

- Start by sitting with your back straight.
- Place the tip of your tongue on the tissue just behind your upper front teeth. Keep your tongue there throughout the exercise.
- Breathe out through your mouth.
- Close your mouth. Breathe in through your nose while counting to 4.
- Hold your breath and count to 7.
- Breathe out through your mouth and count to 8.
- Repeat these steps three more times. Practice this exercise at least twice a day.

The ratio of 4:7:8 is important. Keep to this ratio throughout the exercise. Count faster if you can't hold your breath for the full spans.

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Your diaphragm is at the base of your lungs. It's a muscle that plays a key role in breathing. Diaphragmatic breathing is also known as belly breathing and abdominal breathing.

It might be easier to lie down when you try this exercise for the first time:

- Lie on a flat surface, such as your bed, with your knees bent.
- Place a pillow under your head and pillows under your knees.
- Put one hand on your upper chest. Put your other hand on your stomach just below your rib cage.
- Breathe in through your nose. Concentrate on your breathing and draw the breath down to your stomach. The hand on your stomach will rise with your breath. Your chest should remain still.
- Slowly exhale. Your stomach should fall back down. Your hand on your upper chest should remain still.

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Guided Imagery

Guided imagery combines a breathing exercise with calming visualizations. To practice this exercise, first consider the type of imagery that you may find calming. Some people may enjoy recalling a soothing memory, such as time spent on vacation, while others prefer an imaginary scene like floating in the ocean or on a soft cloud.

Once you have selected an image, practice a breathing exercise such as diaphragmatic breathing while envisioning your chosen scene. To further deepen your sense of relaxation, continue deep and slow breaths as you focus on each of your five senses, including the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feelings that you would encounter within the visualization.

Yoga Nidra

Yoga nidra is a form of meditative yoga intended to induce calmness, which may lead to improved sleep.

In practice, the technique of yoga nidra relies on mental imagery while lying on one's back. You may try yoga nidra with an instructor or through audio or video recordings online.

Yoga nidra often involves the following steps:

- Lie flat on your back with your hands apart.
- Think of a short, positive phrase or mantra.
- Increase your body awareness by mentally visualizing different parts of the body in succession.
- Focus on each breath and imagine the air flowing in and out of the body.
- Recall personal experiences, feelings, and sensations, both good and bad.
- Visualize each specific scene and emotion as if happening in the present moment.
- Repeat the earlier positive phrase and return awareness to the body and room you are in.
- Continue the process until you've reached a deep state of relaxation.

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REGULAR EXERCISE – MODERATE INTENSITY

How much exercise do I need to get to improve my sleep?

Evidence suggests that getting at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity daily can help improve sleep quality.

For long-term sleep health benefits, guidelines adults get 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity and 2 days of muscle-strengthening activity every week.

If 30 minutes per day of working out seems too demanding, try breaking up your workouts into smaller chunks.

5 Reasons Exercise Improves Sleep

Exercise can relieve stress, reset your circadian clock, reduce sleep disorder symptoms, and improve the quality of your sleep.

Regular exercise is an excellent way to help improve your overall sleep health.

According to the U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health, quality sleep can help boost your overall mood, reducing stress and lowering your risk of serious health conditions, like diabetes and heart disease.

If you're having trouble getting a good night's rest, revamping your exercise routine might help you sleep better.

Reasons why exercise can improve sleep

Here are five reasons why exercise may improve your sleep health.

Relieves stress

When stressed, your body releases more stress hormones than necessary. This can impair the quality and duration of your sleep.

According to a 2021 research review, physical activity, like taking a brisk walk or doing high intensity interval training (HIIT), may reduce your cortisol levels. Cortisol is known as the stress hormone.

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And evidence suggests that the higher the intensity of your workout, the greater the impact on cortisol levels. Lower cortisol levels mean less stress, potentially leading to better sleep.

Establishes a solid sleep-wake cycle

Your circadian clock, or sleep-wake cycle, tells your body when it's time to fall asleep and wake up. When something interrupts your circadian rhythm, it's to develop a sleep disorder like insomnia.

Authors of a 2019 suggest that adjusting your workout schedule to fit your circadian rhythm may help support your body clock and alleviate sleep disturbances.

Helps relieve sleep disorder symptoms

If you're already dealing with some kind of sleep disorder, regular exercise might help reduce your symptoms.

A 2021 Source indicates that regular physical activity improves sleep patterns in adults with insomnia and obstructive sleep apnea symptoms.

Improves the quality of your sleep

Working out can also enhance your sleep quality.

According to a 2020 randomized controlled, HIIT may improve sleep quality, including total sleep time, sleep efficiency, and wake-after-sleep onset for middle-aged adults with low physical activity levels.

Sleep efficiency is the of total sleep time to the time spent in bed. Wake-after-sleep onset is the number of minutes you spend awake after falling asleep.

Makes it easier to fall asleep

Strenuous activity may also increase your need for sleep and make it easier to get shut-eye.

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According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the pressure to go to sleep, known as the homeostatic sleep drive, builds up the longer you stay awake. Once you go to bed, the pressure decreases, reaching lower levels after a night of quality sleep.

Exercise can also increase your body's need for sleep. Physically demanding workouts can build your homeostatic sleep drive, making you less likely to spend time staring at the ceiling trying to fall asleep.

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LIMITED NAPS DURING THE DAY

This Is How Long You Should Nap Every Day to Keep Your Brain Healthy

Key Takeaways

- A new study indicated that regular daytime napping might be able to prevent brain shrinkage as we age.
- Previous research recommends napping between 10 to 30 minutes—and not more than an hour—to improve mood and cognitive performance.
- Longer naps can reduce sleep drive and they've been associated with an increased risk of heart problems and type 2 diabetes.

For some, napping feels like a luxury, but a daily afternoon nap might just be what we need to age well. A new study suggests that daytime napping might prevent our brains from shrinking as we age.¹

In the study, published in the journal *Sleep Health*, researchers used self-reported data from 35,080 participants aged 40 to 69 from the U.K. Biobank and examined the genetic variants that were associated with regular napping.

Based on the data, they found a link between habitual daytime napping and larger brain volume. The difference in brain volume between people who nap regularly and those who don't was equivalent to 2.6 to 6.5 years of aging.

But no association was found between napping and cognitive performance, such as reaction time or visual memory.

"Our brains naturally shrink as we age, but this process is accelerated in people with neurodegenerative diseases but also cognitive decline," said Valentina Paz, MSc, a co-author of the study and a research and teaching assistant at the University of the Republic of Uruguay.

For this study, Paz and her team used a technique called Mendelian randomization, a method that allows researchers to find if there is a true cause and effect between two variables in an observational study. This was the first study that found an association between regular daytime napping and total brain volume using Mendelian randomization, according to Paz.

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What's the Optimal Nap Time?

Existing research shows that a brief nap can improve cognitive function and mood. One study found that napping improved orientation, language, and memory skills in people aged above 60.

Naps ranging from 10 to 60 minutes offered immediate improvements in mood and alertness, according to a small study consisting of 32 young adults.³ A 2021 meta-analysis also suggested that short naps can reduce fatigue, boost productivity, and improve physical performance.

But napping too much could be unhealthy. Previous studies have shown that excessive daytime sleepiness and napping for over 60 minutes might increase the risk of type 2 diabetes and heart problems.

Previous research suggested that a 10-minute nap was the most effective at improving sleep latency, fatigue, vigor, and cognitive performance, according to Yishan Xu, PhD, DBSM, a board-certified behavioral sleep medicine specialist and the host of a podcast called Deep Into Sleep.

"I often suggest patients not to take a nap longer than 40 minutes," Xu told Verywell.

Most research shows that naps under 30 minutes hold the best benefits as it's less likely for people to enter the deep sleep stage or experience sleep inertia, a period of impaired alertness right after waking.

Taking long naps during the day is like "eating a cake before dinner," Xu said, because it can reduce sleepiness for your actual bedtime and lead to insomnia.

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MORNING SUNLIGHT EXPOSURE

How Getting Sunlight in the Morning Can Help You Sleep Better

Getting exposure to sunlight in the morning can help you sleep at night because it helps reset your body's inner "sleep clock." Light is an important cue for your body's sleep cycle. The light you are exposed to during the day helps your body figure out when it's time to go to bed (and when it's time to wake up).

Exposing yourself to light for its health and sleep benefits is called light therapy. If you have a sleep disorder, getting light early in the day can even be part of your treatment plan. Natural sunlight is the most potent form of light therapy, but light boxes that emit artificial light can be helpful alternatives for those unable to get outside in direct sunlight each morning.

Why Sunlight Helps You Sleep

Sunlight affects your sleep because it affects your body and its natural rhythms. Your circadian clock, an internally driven 24-hour cycle that help to set your sleep/wake cycle, is most sensitive to light at the following times:

- About one hour after waking up in the morning
- About two hours before your bedtime
- Throughout the night

When you get bright light in the morning it can help you feel more alert during the day and has a later effect that helps you to feel sleepy in the evening and fall asleep earlier.

However, if you are exposed to bright light within two hours of your bedtime, it can make you less sleepy and fall asleep later.

Studies have found that daylight exposure increases sleep duration and improves sleep quality. Sunshine may play a role in regulating hormones, your body's internal clock (circadian rhythm), and sleep patterns by affecting the melatonin secretion in the evening hours prior to bedtime.

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Light Therapy for Sleep Disorders

The cycle of your sleep is a key part of your circadian rhythm. If something goes wrong with your circadian rhythm, it affects your sleep and can result in a sleep disorder.

Getting light in the morning can help with certain sleep disorders:

Delayed sleep phase syndrome in which you go to sleep late and wake up late

Insomnia, or an inability to get enough sleep

Those with delayed sleep phase syndrome or insomnia may find that using light therapy, also called phototherapy, to start the day improves their sleep patterns.

Taking a melatonin supplement may also help people regulate their sleep patterns. The hormone is naturally made by the brain and tells your body when it's time to go to sleep and time to wake up.

Light Therapy for Conditions that Affect Sleep

Research has shown that light therapy can also help people with certain medical conditions that affect their sleep, including:

- Dementia and Alzheimer's disease
- Parkinson's disease
- Depression
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)

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PMR - PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

What Is Progressive Muscle Relaxation?

Progressive muscle relaxation involves sequenced tensing and relaxing muscles from feet to head (or head to feet) throughout the body. The goal is to activate the body's relaxation response by influencing the inner workings of physiology to relieve tension, stress, and other ailments.

The nervous system "switches gears" from the stress to the relaxation response when individuals systematically tense and release muscle groups throughout the body. As this happens, breathing slows, heart rate and blood pressure drop, and stress hormones, like cortisol and adrenaline, decrease.

9 Steps of Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive relaxation can be practiced in any position—lying down, seated, or standing. Learning how to relax muscles in a sequence may sound challenging, but practicing muscle relaxation techniques is relatively simple. Take a moment to settle in before beginning by relaxing your shoulders, opening your hands, and spreading your fingers.

Conceptualize the progressive muscle relaxation steps as different body parts to concentrate on. Actively focus on the sensations in your body and breathing. When your attention wanders, gently return to tensing and relaxing. Progressive muscle relaxation techniques can help you tune into feelings of tension, stress, and anxiety throughout the day.

When practicing, tense your muscles for 15-20 seconds. Release quickly rather than gradually. Relax and breathe deeply for 20-30 seconds before tensing again, focusing on the sensation of stress leaving your body.

Below are the nine steps of progressive muscle relaxation:

Forehead: Furrow your brow as if you were frowning or concentrating deeply before releasing your muscles.

Face: In sequence, squeeze your eyes shut and purse your lips. Press your tongue against the roof of your mouth and release.

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Jaw and cheeks: Clench your jaw (taking care not to cause pain in your teeth), smile broadly, and release.

Neck and shoulders: Press your head back gently, hold, and release that position. Lower your chin toward your chest. Next, shrug your shoulders up to your ears and release.

Arms and hands: Bend your arms at your elbows and flex your biceps. Extend your arms and bend your hands so your fingers point straight up. Make tight fists and release.

Back: Arch your back away from the floor or back of your chair and release.

Buttocks: Squeeze the muscles of your cheeks together and release.

Legs: Clench your thigh muscles, calves, and shins. Flex and point your toes, holding each separately before moving to the next and releasing.

Feet: Curl your toes and release.

Benefits of Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation has numerous mental and physical health benefits, including reduced stress and anxiety. Progressive relaxation can help release muscle tension in the entire body while calming the mind and directing attention away from problems.

Below are the benefits of progressive muscle relaxation:

Pain Relief

Our muscles become tense when we experience stress or anxiety, sometimes leading to pain, inflammation, and discomfort. Progressive muscle relaxation involves systematically tensing and relaxing each muscle group, promoting a sense of calm. Progressive muscle relaxation brings awareness to your pain, allowing you to address specific areas to target tension.

Improved Sleep Quality

Muscular relaxation plays a vital role in improving sleep quality. Many individuals struggle with falling or staying asleep due to restlessness. Progressive muscle relaxation can help calm the body and mind, allowing for a more peaceful and restful sleep.

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Incorporating progressive muscle relaxation exercises into a bedtime routine tells your body to slow down and prepare for rest. You may experience a deeper and more rejuvenating sleep, thus helping decrease nighttime disturbances.

Decreased Anxiety

Practicing progressive muscle relaxation for anxiety can be a valuable tool. In fact, these techniques can reduce anxiety symptoms because they encourage individuals to breathe, relax, and maintain a neutral sense of stillness. Focusing on the physical sensations resulting from anxiety allows people to alleviate tension and inner stress.

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WHITE NOISE MACHINE & EARPLUGS USE

White Noise and Earplugs

We all crave a good night's sleep but often struggle to achieve it due to distractions, noise, or discomfort. One popular solution is using earplugs, but some people have experienced white noise while wearing them. This article will explore why white noise occurs when using earplugs, the benefits of white noise, and tips to maximize the benefits of sleeping with earplugs.

Why does white noise occur with earplugs?

White noise is a constant, soothing sound that people often use to mask other noises from their environment. When using earplugs, individuals might hear a white noise-like sound due to the occlusion effect – the phenomenon where one's own body sounds become amplified when blocking external sounds. This can often be attributed to the pressure changes in the ear or the sound vibrations from our body resonating within the ear canal.

Benefits of white noise and earplugs

Masking unwanted sounds: White noise and earplugs both provide a way to block out disturbing noises, helping you fall asleep faster and enjoy uninterrupted sleep.

Improved focus: White noise can help improve concentration, making it easier to focus on tasks and relax the mind.

Reduces stress and anxiety: By providing a steady, calming sound, white noise can help reduce anxiety and stress that often accompany insomnia or sleeping difficulties.

Tips for maximizing the benefits of earplugs and white noise

Choose the right earplug: Find earplugs that fit comfortably and securely in your ear and are effective at noise reduction. Consider using custom-molded earplugs for an optimal fit.

Experiment with white noise machines or apps: Try a white noise machine or smartphone app to create the ideal sound environment for you. Experiment with different types of white noise, such as pink noise or ocean waves, to see which one helps you relax the most.

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Practice good sleep hygiene: Maintain a consistent bedtime routine, create a sleep-conducive environment, and take steps to reduce stress to help maximize the benefits of using earplugs and white noise.

Consult with a professional: If your sleep problems persist despite using earplugs and white noise, consult with a sleep specialist to discuss other potential solutions, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy or medication.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, white noise when using earplugs is a common phenomenon, with some benefits for individuals struggling with sleep disturbances. By understanding the cause of this occurrence and taking steps to create the ideal sleep environment, you can improve your quality of sleep and overall well-being.

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NO STIMULATING ACTIVITIES BEFORE BEDTIME

Choosing the wrong evening activities, even if seemingly fun, can come back to bite you. You may find it harder to fall asleep, stay asleep, and affect how much deep sleep you actually get.

As a general rule, you want to avoid anything too stimulating and activities that interfere with sleep.

Following things should be avoided.

Doing anything you can't stop

This one is pretty obvious.

Some activities are so fun and engrossing it's hard to call it quits. You say to yourself "just 5 minutes more" which turns into 30 minutes or an hour. Before you know it, you've stayed up way past your bedtime and you're now wide awake...

Electronic screens

Night time electronics use has become a mainstay even in bedrooms. Unfortunately, the bright light from computers, smart phones, tablets, and TV screens can wreck your natural sleep-wake cycle making it harder to feel sleepy.

It signals your brain it's time to wake up.

Snacking on the wrong thing

We've all had a case of the light night munchies. However, if you eat the wrong thing it can come back to bite you with a case of heart burn, an upset tummy, headaches, or wire you up.

On the list of things that will wreck your sleep are spicy foods, caffeinated foods, refined sugary carbs, fatty and high protein foods, and natural diuretics such as water melon.

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Alcohol

Have you ever had a late-night glass of wine to help you relax and fall asleep? Alcohol may be a fun complement to the evening and initially make you drowsy, but later in the night it can cause your sleep to be more shallow and rob you of the benefits of deep restorative sleep.

Cigarette smoking

Some people find it fun and relaxing to have a cigarette while hanging out in the evening. Unfortunately, nicotine users are twice as likely to run into sleep trouble.

They're also four times as likely as nonsmokers to wake up feeling unrested.

Loud racing music

Listening to the wrong type of music, even if it's fun, will get your heart racing and make it harder to transition to sleep.

Social media

There's so much to browse – you can spend hours online reading posts on Facebook, twitter, and other places. Some of the stuff can really get you riled up.

And you're looking at bright screens too.

You-tube

We all love YouTube because there's so much interesting stuff right at your fingertips. There's always something new awaiting you in the suggested videos column.

And that's what makes it so incredibly addictive and hard to stop watching at night. Every night millions of bored people are binge watching YouTube and staying up WAY past their bedtime.

The truth is we all need are sleep.

**Sleep deprived people don't think as clearly, have a harder time coping,
and don't perform as well at school or on the job.**

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BATH OR SHOWER BEFORE BED

When's the best time to take a warm bath for better sleep?

Taking a warm shower or bath before bedtime is a known way to improve sleep, but when's the perfect time to do it? A new study has the answer.

For those who struggle to get a decent amount of sleep each night, there are a number of tips to try to improve the chance of falling asleep and the quality of our rest.

For example, we know that exercising regularly, keeping the bedroom cool, and avoiding alcohol before going to sleep are some great ways to ensure we get a good night's rest.

Taking a bath shower before bedtime is also a well-known sleep remedy.

This is partly because a warm bath can help us relax, but also because our body temperature tends to drop after a warm bath, which can induce better sleep.

However, does it make any difference to sleep quality exactly when we bathe? Researchers led by Shahab Haghayegh, a doctoral researcher in the Department of Biomedical Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin, set out to investigate.

Analyzing bathing time and sleep quality

To find out, Haghayegh and colleagues searched through a total of 5,322 studies from databases such as PubMed, CINAHL, Cochran, Medline, PsycInfo, and Web of Science.

They have published the results of their meta-analysis in the journal Sleep Medicine Reviews.

The researchers analyzed the effects of "water-based passive body heating" on several indicators of sleep quality: "sleep onset latency (SOL), wake after sleep onset, total sleep time, sleep efficiency, slow-wave sleep, and subjective sleep quality."

A longer SOL — that is, how long it takes to fall asleep — is a standard measurement of sleep satisfaction. Sleep efficiency is also a conventional way of measuring sleep that divides the time a person is asleep by the total time they spend in bed minus the SOL.

Finally, slow-wave sleep ^{Trusted Source} describes the deepest phase of sleep, which many believe to be critical for learning and memory consolidation.

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Bathe 1–2 hours before bed for best sleep

The results of the analysis revealed that the best time for taking a shower or a bath is 1–2 hours before going to bed. The duration of the shower or bath does not need to be longer than 10 minutes for a person to reap the benefits.

This cools the body down by improving the blood circulation from the core of the body to its periphery — that is, to the hands and feet.

Taking a warm shower or bath at this time improves the “temperature circadian rhythm,” helping people fall asleep more quickly and improving sleep quality, explain the study authors.

“When we looked through all studies, we noticed significant disparities in terms of the approaches and findings,” explains Haghayegh. “The only way to make an accurate determination of whether sleep can, in fact, be improved was to combine all the past data and look at [them] through a new lens.”

“Yes, the data prove that a warm shower or bath before bed does make a huge difference in your overall sleep quality,” says Haghayegh, adding, “I shower every night before bed now.”

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SLEEP MASK & BLACKOUT CURTAINS

Night Mask Or Blackout Curtains: Which Is Better?

Do you need to sleep in a dark atmosphere to get the best possible rest? Then you have a choice between using a night mask or a blackout curtain. Both can effectively block out light, allowing you to enjoy a good night's sleep. But which to choose for a good night's sleep? We tell you all about it.

The Benefits Of Sleeping In The Dark

Blackout curtains and night masks enable us to control the brightness of a room. And in the case of a bedroom, this can be essential to getting a good night's sleep without being disturbed by outside light.

Sleeping in the dark is good for your health. When there's no light, the brain produces melatonin, a hormone that reduces blood pressure, blood sugar and body temperature. It also stimulates the immune system.

Daytime produces cortisol, the stress hormone. Sleeping in light is therefore not recommended, even at night. You undoubtedly have street lighting or simply the moon lighting up the sky.

So you need to reduce the brightness in your bedroom. And for this, you can choose between two well-known tools: the blackout curtain or the night mask.

The Blackout Curtain In Detail

A blackout curtain is often the tool of choice for significantly reducing light in a room. Blackout curtains effectively preserve your privacy. They are also ideal for achieving total darkness in your room. You'll need to select a curtain with a tight weave to prevent light from filtering through. Dark colors are recommended. There are three types of blackout curtain: double curtains, curtain blinds and Japanese blinds.

Double curtains add character to your room, giving it a high-end decorative touch. Curtain blinds control light perfectly. Japanese blinds are very stylish.

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If you opt for a blackout curtain, choose a model suited to your room. If your room is small, it's best to forget patterned curtains, reserved for spacious rooms. You'll also want to choose the right material. Above all, a blackout curtain needs to be thick. Its mass per unit area should be at least 250 g/m². You can choose a curtain in linen and jacquard or taffeta to bring elegance to your room, or in velvet for its luxurious feel.

Night Masks

Night masks offer many benefits for a good night's sleep. In fact, they are often considered a major contributor to improved sleep. They also provide a soothing sensation that is beneficial to sleep.

There are many different types of night mask. You'll find fabric masks, gel masks, masks with pads, heated masks and weighted masks.

Fabric masks are suitable for most people. Gel masks will keep you cool, lowering your body temperature for a better night's sleep. Heated, the mask is relaxing. Cushioned, the mask fits your face better and you'll find it more comfortable. Ballasted, they give you a feeling of heaviness that can help you calm down.

Choosing Between Night Masks And Blackout Curtains

If you're on the fence between these two sleep-enhancing tools, here's some useful information.

The darker your sleeping space, the better you'll rest. So you'll have to choose between these two ways of making your space darker. This will help you achieve deep, restorative sleep.

Night masks have been found to play an important role in combating insomnia. A professor at the Royal Brompton Hospital Centre for Sleep in London found that wearing a night mask reduced the time spent awake in bed by 70%. It's also an excellent excuse not to have to keep opening your eyes, so you can sleep better.

Another advantage of the mask is that it prevents dry eyes. If you sleep in a dry room, your eyes may suffer from dryness. The mask provides protection. Eyelids are lubricated. Around the eye, the environment will be closed.

Masks can also be useful for the skin around the eyes. They protect against pillow rubbing, which can lead to wrinkles by damaging collagen.

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Another benefit of the mask is that it helps you to relax. They also block harmful light (or blue light).

As you can see, the night mask has many advantages. So it's much more interesting than the blackout curtain, even if the blackout curtain can bring elegance to a room.

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AROMATHERAPY - LAVENDER OR VANILLA

Aromatherapy Sleep Lavender Vanilla

Are you struggling to get a good night's sleep? Aromatherapy may be the answer you've been looking for. In this article, we will explore the benefits of using aromatherapy, specifically focusing on the calming scents of lavender and vanilla to help promote relaxation and improve sleep quality. Aromatherapy sleep lavender vanilla has been gaining popularity as a natural and holistic approach to combat sleep issues, making it an exciting topic to delve into.

Aromatherapy is the practice of using essential oils derived from plants to enhance psychological and physical well-being. The therapeutic use of these aromatic oils has been shown to have a positive impact on various aspects of health, including stress reduction, mood enhancement, and most importantly, sleep improvement. Through this article, we aim to shed light on how aromatherapy can be used as a natural remedy for those struggling with insomnia or restless nights.

We will also take an in-depth look at the science behind essential oils and how they work to influence our emotions and promote relaxation. Specifically, we will focus on two popular aroma choices for better sleep – lavender and vanilla.

Scientific studies have shown that these scents have powerful effects on the mind and body when it comes to promoting calmness and inducing a restful state conducive for a good night's sleep. So, if you're curious about harnessing the power of aromatherapy for better sleep, read on as we uncover its potential benefits and best practices for use.

Understanding Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is a holistic healing treatment that uses natural plant extracts, known as essential oils, to promote health and well-being. These essential oils are extracted from various parts of plants, including flowers, leaves, bark, and roots, through processes like distillation or cold-pressing. The science behind aromatherapy lies in the powerful compounds found in these essential oils, which have been shown to have therapeutic effects on the body and mind.

When it comes to promoting better sleep and relaxation, certain essential oils have been found to be particularly effective. Lavender is one of the most popular essential oils used for its calming and soothing properties. Its scent has been shown to reduce anxiety and stress, making it an ideal choice for those struggling with sleep issues.

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Vanilla is another essential oil that has been associated with relaxation and improved sleep quality. Its sweet and comforting aroma can help create a tranquil atmosphere conducive to rest.

The effectiveness of aromatherapy for sleep has been supported by various research studies. For instance, a study published in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine found that inhaling lavender oil before bedtime led to improved sleep quality in participants.

Another study in the International Journal of Neuroscience reported that vanilla fragrance reduced symptoms of anxiety in patients undergoing MRI scans, demonstrating its potential for calming effects. These findings highlight the science-backed benefits of using essential oils like lavender and vanilla for better sleep through aromatherapy.

The Power of Lavender

Lavender has long been recognized for its ability to promote relaxation and improve sleep quality. Its soothing scent has been used for centuries in various cultures as a natural remedy for insomnia and anxiety. The essential oil derived from the lavender plant contains compounds that have a calming effect on the nervous system, making it an ideal choice for those seeking a more restful slumber.

Calming Effects of Lavender

One of the key benefits of lavender in promoting relaxation and sleep is its ability to reduce stress and anxiety. Studies have shown that inhaling the aroma of lavender essential oil can significantly decrease levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, in the body. This can help individuals achieve a state of calmness and tranquility, which is essential for falling asleep easily and staying asleep throughout the night.

Improving Sleep Quality With Lavender

In addition to its calming effects, lavender has also been found to improve the overall quality of sleep. Research has demonstrated that using lavender aromatherapy before bedtime can lead to longer periods of deep or slow-wave sleep, which is crucial for feeling fully rested upon waking. This means that incorporating lavender into your nightly routine can not only help you fall asleep faster but also ensure that you experience more rejuvenating and restorative sleep.

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It's important to note that while many people find relief from their sleep troubles through aromatherapy with lavender, individual responses may vary. Some individuals may be highly sensitive to scents, so it's advisable to test out different methods of using lavender aromatherapy to find what works best for you. Whether it's through diffusing essential oils or using scented pillow sprays, lavender is a versatile option for those looking to enhance their sleep experience naturally.

Vanilla

One of the reasons vanilla is effective in promoting better sleep is its ability to reduce anxiety and stress. The sweet and comforting aroma of vanilla has been shown to have a calming effect on the mind, helping to alleviate mental tension and promote relaxation. This can be particularly helpful for individuals who struggle with racing thoughts or find it difficult to unwind at bedtime.

Another benefit of using vanilla as part of your aromatherapy routine is its ability to improve mood and create a sense of warmth and comfort. The familiar scent of vanilla has been associated with feelings of happiness and contentment, which can contribute to a more positive mindset before bedtime. By creating a cozy and inviting atmosphere, vanilla can help signal to your brain that it's time to relax and prepare for sleep.

Incorporating vanilla into your aromatherapy practice for better sleep doesn't have to be complicated. You can easily enjoy the benefits of this soothing scent by using vanilla essential oil in a variety of ways, such as through diffusers, room sprays, or adding a few drops to a warm bath before bed. Additionally, vanilla can be combined with other complementary essential oils like lavender or chamomile to create customized blends that cater to your specific sleep needs.

Best Practices for Using Aromatherapy for Sleep

Aromatherapy has been used for centuries to promote relaxation, improve sleep quality, and enhance overall well-being. When it comes to using aromatherapy for sleep, there are some best practices to keep in mind in order to maximize its effectiveness. Whether you prefer the soothing scent of lavender or the sweet aroma of vanilla, incorporating aromatherapy into your bedtime routine can help you unwind and prepare for a restful night's sleep.

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Here are some best practices for using aromatherapy for sleep:

1. **Choose the Right Essential Oils:** Not all essential oils are created equal when it comes to promoting better sleep. Lavender and vanilla are two popular choices known for their calming and comforting properties. Other essential oils commonly used for sleep include chamomile, bergamot, and sandalwood.

2. **Diffusion Methods:** There are several ways to use essential oils for aromatherapy, including diffusers, spritzing pillows and bedding, or adding a few drops to a warm bath before bedtime. Experiment with different methods to find what works best for you.

3. **Consistency is Key:** To experience the full benefits of aromatherapy for sleep, consistency is key. Establishing a regular bedtime routine that includes aromatherapy can signal to your body that it's time to wind down and relax.

Incorporating aromatherapy into your nightly routine can help create an inviting and calming atmosphere that promotes better sleep. Whether you choose to use a pre-made blend or create your own custom scent, the soothing aroma of lavender and vanilla can help lull you into a deep and restorative slumber.

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LIMIT FLUIDS BEFORE BEDTIME

Sleep disorder specialist Jessica Vensel Rundo, MD, MS, explains why you should be mindful of how much water you're drinking before bed.

"In general, we don't recommend drinking a large amount of water before bedtime, but a small amount is good," says Dr. Vensel Rundo.

When's the best time to stop drinking water?

It's often recommended that you should stop drinking water two hours before going to bed. This way, you're not flooding your body with extra fluids that may cause an unwanted trip to the bathroom in the middle of the night.

If you do need to have some water before you hit the hay — whether it's because your mouth is feeling parched or you need to take nightly medications — a little bit is still OK.

"As a general rule, drink less than a glass of water in those last two hours before bedtime if you have to. And drink small sips," advises Dr. Vensel Rundo.

This goes for other late night sips as well. Try to avoid fluids like alcohol, juice and tea within those last two hours before your head hits the pillow.

Why should you stop drinking water right before bed?

While staying hydrated is important, getting a good night's rest is just as crucial. A quick 2 a.m. trip to the bathroom here and there is expected. But if your sleep's regularly getting interrupted, it may be time to change your nighttime routine.

"It can start to disrupt your sleep and it can make you have trouble falling back asleep," says Dr. Vensel Rundo.

If your sleep is constantly interrupted night after night, it can even lead to sleep deprivation and worsen the quality of your sleep.

"Your immune system is not as effective after experiencing any kind of sleep deprivation," explains Dr. Vensel Rundo.

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While getting up to go to the bathroom occasionally won't hurt your health, it's important to note that constant sleep interruptions can lead to a variety of issues. After all, sleep ties in with everything from our immune system to mental health. Intense sleep deprivation has been shown to have a link to:

- Memory loss.
- Infections.
- High blood pressure.
- High cholesterol levels.
- Weight gain.
- Cancer.

It's also important to know if you have any conditions that may cause frequent urination. If so, you may need to cut down on your water intake even earlier before bed. One study showed that even drinking water an hour before bed wasn't enough for people who experience nocturia.

So, when should you drink water?

If there's one thing we know for sure, it's that you should be drinking water consistently throughout the day. This doesn't mean drinking large amounts of water in one sitting — especially not before bed.

Instead, keep a balance of fluids throughout the day by:

- Drinking water with every meal.
- Staying hydrated after exercising.
- Getting extra water from fruits and vegetables.

"There isn't a specific time of the day necessarily that's optimal to get all of your fluid intake in," says Dr. Vensel Rundo. "It's more of a continuous period of time throughout the day and making sure you're consistent."

If you're experiencing frequent urination at night, talk to your healthcare provider.

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NO ALCOHOL BEFORE BEDTIME

Sure, that nightcap, last glass of wine or beer before bed may help you feel sleepy. But it can actually end up robbing you of a good night's rest — or worse, could cause some challenging sleep problems.

"While it's true that alcohol is a sedative, both having it in your system as well as the process of it wearing off can cause a variety of different problems," says neurologist and sleep expert Jessica Vensel Rundo, MD. "You're likely to experience fragmented sleep, insomnia or possibly more serious sleep issues.

What alcohol actually does to your sleep cycles

Each night, your sleep has stages or cycles. Your deep restful sleep tends to be more prevalent in the first few hours but decreases during the second half. Then REM (your dreaming sleep) follows as the night goes on.

If you have alcohol in your system when you hit the hay, you may not sleep very deeply, or for very long, on and off throughout the night. That's because as alcohol starts to metabolize, the sedative effect wears off.

"This prevents you from getting the deep sleep and rapid eye movement (REM) sleep you need because the alcohol in your system keeps you in lighter stages of sleep," Dr Vensel Rundo says. "You'll likely wake up easily and more often, especially in the later half of the night."

Other sleep problems alcohol causes

Besides just waking you up a lot, alcohol can disrupt your normal sleep patterns enough to create some longer-term issues you may need to address.

Vivid dreams and nightmares — With alcohol in your system you're more likely to have intense, colorful dreams and nightmares as you sleep patterns ebb and flow. You may or may not remember them, but they can be lucid or give you a feeling that you are half awake and half asleep. Because at some point, you might actually be.

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Sleepwalking and parasomnias — You may experience moving a lot or talking while you're sleeping. There's a chance you'll physically act out your dreams in your sleep, or even sleepwalk.

You may also experience parasomnias which are disruptive sleep disorders that occur in specific stages of sleep or in sleep-wake transitions. These can happen during arousals from rapid eye movement (REM) sleep or non-rapid eye movement (NREM) sleep.

Breathing problems — Since alcohol's sedative effect extends to your entire body, including your muscles, it may allow your airway to close more easily while you're asleep. This can greatly increase the risk of sleep apnea especially if you drink within the last couple of hours before bedtime.

The day after and long-term effects of alcohol

"Like many other drugs, if you drink alcohol before bedtime, you can expect to wake up with some degree of grogginess," Dr. Vensel Rundo says. "Your body will need to compensate for the lack of good sleep you didn't get and your alertness may be impaired."

With extended use of alcohol over time, there can be long-term concerns, too. Many who abuse alcohol often do it well into the night and oversleep into the next day. In time this may lead to switching up day and night sleeping patterns. Then, as withdrawal from the drug or alcohol occurs there's a big sleep-wake reversal which then needs to be addressed.

"Existing research also shows alcohol decreases your melatonin levels, the hormone that regulates your internal clock," she says. "If you become dependent on drugs or alcohol, over time you could get your days and nights mixed up."

What you can do if your sleep is impacted

Simply cutting back or giving up alcohol or other drugs can be enough to reverse the negative impacts on your sleep (and can greatly improve your health overall).

"But if you have continued sleep issues that don't go away," Dr. Vensel Rundo suggests, "it's a really good idea to have a conversation with a sleep specialist."

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MELATONIN SUPPLEMENT

Melatonin: Benefits, Uses, Side Effects and Dosage

Melatonin is a common dietary supplement that has gained widespread popularity around the globe.

Though renowned as a natural sleep aid, it also has powerful effects on other aspects of your health.

What Is Melatonin?

Melatonin is a hormone produced by the pineal gland in your brain.

It's primarily responsible for regulating your body's circadian rhythm to manage your natural sleep cycle.

Therefore, it's often used as a sleep aid to combat issues like insomnia.

It's widely available in the US and Australia as an over-the-counter medication but requires a prescription in other parts of the world, such as Europe.

In addition to improving sleep, melatonin is also involved in managing immune function, blood pressure and cortisol levels.

Plus, it acts as an antioxidant, with some research finding that it can significantly affect many health conditions.

In fact, studies show that melatonin may improve eye health, reduce symptoms of seasonal depression and even provide relief from acid reflux.

Can Support Better Sleep

Melatonin is often called the sleep hormone — and for good reason.

It's one of the most popular sleep aids and a common natural remedy to treat issues like insomnia.

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Multiple studies have demonstrated that melatonin can support better sleep.

One study in 50 people with insomnia showed that taking melatonin two hours before bed helped people fall asleep faster and enhanced overall sleep quality.

Another large analysis of 19 studies in children and adults with sleep disorders found that melatonin reduced the amount of time it took to fall asleep, increased total sleep time and improved sleep quality.

However, though melatonin is associated with fewer side effects than other sleep medications, it may be less effective.

Dosage

Melatonin can be taken in doses of 0.5–10 mg per day.

However, because not all melatonin supplements are the same, it's best to stick to the recommended dosage on the label to avoid adverse side effects.

You may also want to start with a lower dose and increase as needed to find what works for you.

If you're using melatonin to improve sleep quality, try taking it 30 minutes before bedtime for maximum effectiveness.

Meanwhile, if you're using it to correct your circadian rhythm and establish a more regular sleep schedule, you should take it about 2–3 hours before you go to bed.

Safety and Side Effects

Research shows that melatonin is safe and non-addictive for both short- and long-term use in adults.

Additionally, despite concerns that supplementing with melatonin may decrease your body's ability to produce it naturally, several studies show otherwise.

However, because long-term studies on the effects of melatonin are limited to adults, it's not currently recommended for children or adolescents.

Some of the most commonly reported side effects associated with melatonin include nausea, headaches, dizziness and sleepiness.

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MASSAGE BEFORE BED

The Benefits of Massage Before Bed and How it Can Improve Your Sleep

Massage therapy has been used for centuries to help relax the body and improve overall well-being. But did you know that getting a massage before bed can also improve the quality and quantity of your sleep?

What are the Benefits of Massage Before Bed?

- Relieves Stress and Anxiety
- Reduces Muscle Tension and Pain
- Increases Blood Circulation and Oxygenation
- Boosts the Immune System
- Improves Mood and Overall Well-Being

How Does Massage Help You Sleep Better?

- Increases Levels of Serotonin and Melatonin
- Reduces Levels of Cortisol and Adrenaline
- Promotes Relaxation and Calmness
- Stimulates the Parasympathetic Nervous System
- Improves Sleep Quality and Duration

Different Techniques for Massage Before Bed

- Swedish Massage
- Deep Tissue Massage
- Aromatherapy Massage
- Hot Stone Massage
- Shiatsu Massage

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Tips to Maximize the Effects of Massage Before Bed

- Schedule Your Massage at the Right Time
- Create a Relaxing Environment
- Choose the Right Massage Oil or Lotion
- Communicate with Your Massage Therapist
- Stay Hydrated

Conclusion:

Getting a massage before bed can have numerous benefits for your mind and body, including improving your sleep quality and duration. Whether you opt for a Swedish, deep tissue, or aromatherapy massage, it is important to communicate with your massage therapist and create a relaxing environment to maximize its effects.

So, the next time you struggle to fall asleep, consider getting a massage before bed and experience the amazing benefits for yourself.

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SLEEP PROMOTING YOGA

Does Yoga Help You Sleep?

Over 55% of yoga practitioners report improved sleep and over 85% report reduced stress. Many studies demonstrate that yoga can improve sleep for a variety of different populations. These studies typically focus on one's quality of sleep rather than the quantity, as increased amounts of sleep do not necessarily correlate with quality sleep and overall wellbeing. While the definition of quality sleep varies among sleepers, it usually includes feeling energized for the day and a lack of disturbances.

How Often Do You Need to Practice Yoga to Improve Sleep?

Occasional yoga practice will likely improve sleep quality more than no practice at all. However, regular, long-term practitioners experience better sleep quality.

If you aim to use yoga as a tool to improve your sleep, consider making a schedule where you regularly practice. This may include attending classes weekly, designating a certain time of day to practice at home, or a combination of both.

How Yoga Helps You Sleep

There are many ways that yoga can help improve the quality of sleep:

Mindfulness: This is a practice of judgment-free awareness in the moment. Mindfulness is a common component of many types of yoga. Mindfulness can increase melatonin levels and reduce nighttime sleep disturbances in adults.

Breathing awareness and regulation: These are also elements of yoga. Deep breathing is a relaxation technique that can induce sleep.

Regular exercise: Frequent movement is an important element of sleep hygiene. Moderate exercise several times a week can improve overall sleep.

Weight loss: While weight loss may not be the primary goal for some yoga practitioners, losing weight can have positive effects on sleep. Weight loss can reduce or eliminate a variety of sleep problems, such as sleep apnea.

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NO SCREENS BEFORE BED

Reasons To Put Your Screens Away Before Bed

Using electronics too close to bedtime can greatly impact your sleep. Here are some of the ways technology and screens before bed can affect not only your sleep quality but also your overall health.

It Stimulates Your Brain

The moments before bed should be a time for our brains to wind down from the day's activities. However, bringing electronics into our bedtime routine can keep our brains active and awake, making it harder to fall asleep. This is one of the key ways electronics affect sleep.

It Limits REM Sleep

When your brain stays alert from activities like doomscrolling or thinking about a work project, it can keep you awake and make it harder to fall asleep. This distraction can affect the quality and quantity of your rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, which starts within the first 90 minutes of falling asleep, then cycles through your sleep the rest of the night.

Quality REM sleep is important because it impacts your learning, memory, and mood. Research has also shown that insufficient REM sleep can lead to health issues like reduced coping skills, migraines, and obesity.

Blue Light Can Disrupt Your Internal Clock

The blue light from your phone and other electronic devices mimics daylight. According to recent studies, this can disrupt your circadian rhythm, which is your body's internal clock that tells you when it's time to sleep and when it's time to be awake.

Other research has found that artificial blue light can also reduce levels of melatonin, a hormone that controls your sleep-wake cycle. When you have less melatonin, you can feel tired and irritable during the day.

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It Can Cause Strong Emotions

Using your phone or other technology before bed can garner intense emotions. Reading a disturbing news story or receiving a heated message before bed can cause you to be upset. And as studies have shown, stress and anxiety are two primary factors for poor sleep quality.

Using Electronics at Night

If you find yourself in a situation where you have to use your electronics at night, there are a few things you can do to minimize their effect on your sleep. Here are some strategies to mitigate the impact of screen time before bed on sleep quality.

First, put your cell phone, tablet, or other electronic device on “sleep mode.” This softer light can make it easier on your eyes and help reduce blue light emissions.

Secondly, invest in a pair of blue-light-blocking glasses to help shield your eyes from your screen’s blue light emissions.

And finally, limit your screen time at night as much as possible.

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SLEEP RITUAL

What Is a Bedtime Ritual?

A bedtime ritual, also sometimes called a bedtime routine, is a set of activities that you perform nightly in preparation for going to bed. For adults, bedtime rituals typically last 30 minutes to an hour. For children, 20 to 45 minutes should be enough time to wind down.

Your bedtime ritual should include practices that help you relax, like having a cup of warm milk. It can also incorporate practical activities, like brushing your teeth or putting on pajamas. Additionally, your ritual might include activities that hold personal significance, like journaling or singing a child their favorite lullaby.

Whatever you choose to include in your ritual, the key is doing it consistently—ideally performing activities in the same order every night.

Why Are Bedtime Rituals Important?

A bedtime ritual is important not only because it prepares you for sleep but also because it helps establish healthy sleep habits, known as sleep hygiene. Behaviors surrounding sleep develop during childhood and often become fixed patterns by adulthood. If your current habits don't support good sleep, a bedtime ritual can help you make necessary changes.

Bedtime rituals can also help reduce anxiety. Worry can make it hard to fall asleep at night, but for some people, anxiety at bedtime is common. Rituals can provide comfort by offering predictability and structure. Some rituals, such as journaling, might also alleviate anxiety by giving the writer a fresh perspective or sense of meaning.

Establishing a bedtime ritual can be helpful for anyone, but it can be particularly helpful for anyone who regularly struggles with sleep, including:

- People with sleep disorders
- Shift workers
- Children

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Nightly Rituals to Improve Your Sleep

Choosing a bedtime ritual can help you prepare for sleep. There are many activities that are well-suited for bedtime rituals. Consider trying several bedtime rituals and see what works best for you.

Taking a Warm Bath or Shower

A warm bath or shower can be a relaxing way to wind down before bed. Not only does the warm water have a calming effect, but the drop in body temperature that happens after bathing or showering can help you fall asleep faster. That's because your body temperature naturally decreases at night, signaling that it's time to sleep.

Spending Time With a Loved One

Spending time with a loved one, or even a pet, is another great way to wind down before sleep. Physically or emotionally connecting with someone you care about can help to alleviate stress and improve feelings of well-being, making it easier to fall asleep.

If you have a romantic partner, you might incorporate talking about your day, cuddling, or giving and receiving encouragement into your bedtime routine. If you are a caregiver for a child, reading stories, snuggling, and singing lullabies can provide an opportunity to bond as you prepare for bedtime.

Preparing for the Next Day

Stress can be a big contributor to sleep troubles. Planning and preparing for the next day can reduce stress by giving you less to keep track of. Try making a to-do list, laying out your clothes, or even packing your lunch for the next day. Just be sure to stay away from your phone and emails.

Journaling

Putting your thoughts and concerns in writing might be just what you need to quiet your mind at bedtime. Alternatively, you might keep a "gratitude journal," a practice that can help you feel a stronger sense of well-being.

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Meditating

Another way to prepare your mind and body for sleep is through meditation. There are many ways to practice meditation, most of which encourage awareness of the present moment without judgment.

Research has shown that meditation can reduce anxiety and improve sleep quality. It can also facilitate relaxation and feelings of tranquility and interconnectedness. If you are new to meditation, consider trying some of the many guided meditations available online, including those specifically focused on sleep.

Doing Yoga

Regular yoga practice has also been linked with improved sleep quality. Yoga combines movement, breathwork, and meditation into a practice with many benefits for physical and mental health. In addition to helping you relax, yoga can offer relief from anxiety, back pain, and depression—conditions known to interfere with sleep.

Drinking a Warm Beverage

Many people swear by their nightly cup of herbal tea or warm milk as a way to relax before bed. Chamomile has calming properties, and milk contains tryptophan, an amino acid known to help people fall asleep and stay asleep. When choosing a beverage, make sure to avoid ones that contain caffeine.

Reading

Reading is a great activity to include in your bedtime routine. Some evidence indicates that people who read a book in bed before going to sleep have better sleep quality and fewer sleep disturbances than those who don't read at bedtime.

Listening to Relaxing Music

Because music has a strong influence on mood, people often turn to it as a sleep aid. Many find that music relaxes them and can also provide a welcome distraction from stressful thoughts that might otherwise impact sleep.

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SLEEP SOUNDLY

25 Proven Natural Techniques

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Sleep Soundly: Achieve Restful Nights Naturally

Stop tossing and turning! This book offers 25 proven techniques to help you fall asleep faster, stay asleep longer, and wake up feeling refreshed.

Discover:

- The science of sleep and why it matters for your health and well-being.
- How to create a relaxing bedtime routine for a perfect night's sleep.
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- Techniques to wind down before bed, like deep breathing exercises and calming meditation.
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