

## 20 TIPS TO HELP YOU SLEEP BETTER



A couple of months ago, in the middle of this pandemic, I suddenly had a really hard time falling asleep (and staying asleep!). The anxiety of what was happening in the world kept me tossing and turning, and when I would finally crash at around 2 or 3 am, I would wake up every hour and obsessively check the news or start thinking about all the unknowns so it was impossible for me to get back to sleep. I'm sure many of you can relate to this sudden and persistent lack of sleep so I am going to share with you what worked for me and what I recommend to my clients who have trouble sleeping and hopefully it will help you too!

Regular, adequate sleep is ESSENTIAL to good health. People underestimate how a simple lack of sleep can lower your immune system making you more susceptible to get sick. It also increases irritability, and contributes to weight gain, not to mention affecting the way you look by increasing under-eye circles, wrinkles and bloodshot eyes. Seriously, it's a nightmare! (See what I did there? ☹ ) Anyway, just because 2020 has gone off the rails doesn't mean we should add to the trauma. Here's to improving the quality and quantity of your sleep with these 20 awesome, but simple tips:

## 1. Keep your room temperature cool

A too-warm room makes you sweaty (nothing more gross than waking up in a pool of your own sweat, am I right? If you have never experienced that, count your blessings!) and a super cold one leaves you shivering. Go for a slightly cool temperature which helps decrease your body's internal thermometer, initiating sleepiness and ensuring that you stay comfortable throughout the night.

## 2. Sleep in darkness

Darkness triggers the production of the natural sleep hormone melatonin. When we are exposed to light at night, the production of this hormone decreases and our sleep is interrupted. Shut the lights and close the window shades – blackout shades are best – at least 30 minutes before bedtime. Skip the nightlight – I promise there are no monsters hiding under your bed.

## 3. Keep the extra noises out

Turn off extra noises and distractions. Make sure nobody is in the kitchen clattering some pots and dishes around or watching TV in the family room with theater-level sound. Maybe that's just my house? Do what I do – yell at them

across the house from your bed to stop □ – then turn on a fan, or white noise via Alexa or a phone app, calming instrumental music or, if it's comfortable, use earplugs to completely block out the noise.

#### 4. Avoid using loud alarm clocks

Speaking of noises, it is very stressful on the body to be awoken suddenly. Those buzzing alarms are especially bad for the endocrine system. If you have an alarm that can be set to music and wake you by gently getting louder or a fitness watch that will vibrate on your wrist to wake you up, those are much better.

#### 5. Use essential oils

Incorporating essential oils or aromatherapy, into your nightly routine is a safe, natural and therapeutic way to encourage your body to wind down. I personally have [this diffuser](#) near my bed and I use either the Sweet Sleep Serum from [Living Libations](#) (absolute favorite brand but they ship from Canada so it can take a couple of weeks if you live in the US) or the [Doterra](#) Serenity essential oil blend. They each smell amazing and have a great calming effect. Living Libations smells a little more citrusy and Doterra's has a stronger lavender smell so it's just a matter of preference.

You can also use individual oils make your own blend using Lavender, Ylang Ylang, Roman Chamomile, Cedarwood or Sandalwood. Make sure your oils are pure (most store bought oils are NOT); otherwise they will not have the right effect and may even give you a headache.

## 6. Unwind your mind

To help overcome your sleep problems, read a good novel or a self-help book if that's more your thing, a half hour or so before bedtime. This practice gives your body a chance to unwind instead of forcing it to try and head straight to sleep. Or try writing in a journal – for some people it helps to get all those anxious thoughts out on paper. I don't personally do this but I am still putting it out there because I know it works for a lot of people!

## 7. Keep electronics out of bed

Watching television in bed and answering late-night work emails can trick your brain into thinking that your bed is just another spot to get things done and not the place to settle down after a long day. This is a tough one for me personally! But it is definitely too stimulating to the brain and makes it take longer to fall asleep. It's also disruptive of pineal gland function for the amount of light hitting the eye. Although you might think the night setting on your phone or tablet helps, its not enough. If you have no self control – no judgement here, I'm the same way – just put the electronics outside of your room. If you are like me, hopefully you will be too lazy to get them once they are out of reach.

## 8. Maintain a regular sleep schedule

Another key sleep habit? Keep your circadian rhythm in check by sticking to a regular sleep schedule as much as possible. As your body becomes used to getting into bed and waking up at the same hours, you'll find it becomes easier to fall asleep and wake up naturally. Aim for an average of seven to eight hours of quality sleep a night. I know, I know, I am lucky to get 6, but... goals!

## 9. Go to bed earlier

It's not just a sleep schedule that's important but also the time you go to bed. 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 in the same period of time. If you are awake, the toxins back up into the liver, which then secondarily backs up into your entire system and cause further disruption of your health. Yikes! It's better for your overall health to sleep from 11PM to 6AM than from 1AM to 8AM.

## 10. Limit caffeine after 12 p.m

This would seem obvious, but many people think if they have it early enough, it won't effect their sleep. But a recent study showed that caffeine is not metabolized properly in some people and they can feel the effects long after consuming it, preventing them from falling asleep. In fact, a review of two randomized control trials showed that eliminating caffeine for a whole day was able to improve sleep quality and lengthen sleep duration. Instead of turning to coffee, try an alternative, caffeine-free drink instead such as [dandy blend](#) or organic herbal tea (see Tip #16).

## 11. Work out in the morning

That rush of endorphins you feel after a solid workout is awesome – until it's the reason you can't sleep at night. Try shifting your workout schedule to the mornings. You'll feel great having completed your exercise session bright and early, and it'll be easier to unwind at night. Plus, research shows that exercise in general is known to effectively decrease sleep problems and treat symptoms of insomnia. It doesn't have to be a crazy hard workout – an hour brisk walk in the morning will have the same benefits.

## 12. Get some sunshine

Starting your day with natural light exposure helps reset your biological clock. It also balances your body's melatonin and cortisol levels (the sleep and stress hormones), and serves as a natural source of vitamin D. Did you know that Vitamin D deficiency is not only linked to a lower immune system but may be linked to sleep disorders as well. The early morning walk mentioned above will cover both exercise and Vitamin D. I just love a good dual-purpose activity, don't you?

## 13. Skip late night sugar and simple carbs

Avoid eating sugary sweets, simple carbs and fruit juice just before bed, as it can spike blood sugar and make you wake up feeling hungry – literally fueling insomnia. Instead, try one of these healthy bedtime snacks:

- Sliced banana with almond butter on a [thin rice cake](#).
- [Organic hummus](#) with carrots
- Dried apple with cinnamon
- A small handful of nuts/seeds – or, I like to chop up this mini [Kind bar](#) – added to [unsweetened organic greek yogurt](#).

## 14. Avoid foods that you may be sensitive to

In addition to avoiding sugary sweets and simple carbs, it's also a good idea to avoid any foods you might be sensitive to. Not sure which foods are affecting you? The most common food sensitivities are: Wheat, Dairy, Soy, Corn, Eggs, and Nuts. Dairy and wheat products in particular may have effect on sleep, such as excess congestion, gastrointestinal upset and apnea. If you want to get more specific, I recommend an [IgG Food Sensitivity Test](#). With a simple fingerprick, 96 foods+ can be tested from your own home using a kit that is sent to you.

## 15. Avoid alcohol

Although alcohol will make you drowsy, the effect is short lived and most people will wake up several hours later, unable to fall back asleep. I know all you wine connoisseurs will disagree with me on this, and maybe a glass of wine does work for you, but if you go this route make sure you aren't drinking the whole bottle (you know who you are ☹ ) Alcohol also keeps you from falling into the deeper stages of sleep, where the body does most of

it's healing. If you need something to drink....keep reading!

## 16. Drink some hot tea

Confession time – I LOVE tea and have a bit of an obsession with it. I'm not sure if it's because I really don't like the taste of plain water or if it's because I love [this incredible organic neem honey](#) that I put in the tea.....or maybe I am secretly British, who knows! In any case, here are some of my personal favorite teas:

[David's Tea](#) – Organic Super Ginger, Organic Calming Chamomile, Organic Peppermint and Organic Cinnamon Roobios Chai (Note: not all David's teas are kosher and many contain artificial ingredients; I only recommend the ones that are Organic). Make sure the tea(s) you have before bed are caffeine-free.

## 17. Take a hot bath before bed

When body temperature is raised in the late evening, it will fall at bedtime, facilitating sleep. Add a few drops of 100% pure essential oils like Lavender or Wild Chamomile (or one of the essential oil sleep blends mentioned in Tip #5) and/or pure [Epsom Salts](#) to your bath to relax you even further. Note: if your Epsom Salts brand makes you itchy, it's likely not pure. If essential oils make you break out, you may be allergic/sensitive to that particular one OR it may not be pure as well. Unfortunately, many brands, even those found in health food stores, may not be up to high quality standards and contain irritating ingredients.

## 18. Have a good mattress

It probably goes without saying that if you have an uncomfortable mattress, it will be hard to fall asleep and stay asleep! A good mattress doesn't mean the most expensive but it should be one that is the appropriate firmness for your body weight and health concerns as well as non-toxic and hypoallergenic for the most relaxing sleep. To learn more about the best non-toxic mattresses and why it's so important, click [HERE](#).

## 19. Use natural sleep supplements

When all else fails, or if you are just a chronic insomniac, we have to bring out the big guns! This is where quality supplements come in. There are a lot of "sleep formulas" out there but I'm not a fan because if you are sensitive to an ingredient it can have the opposite effect by keeping you awake and you won't know the specific culprit. It's best to take them individually, starting with Magnesium and then adding Melatonin and Valerian, as needed. For the exact supplement products I recommend [see my sleep protocol](#).

## 20. Bonus Tip from a Certified Life Coach: [Are panic attacks keeping you awake?](#)

Panic attacks, especially during these times, are extremely common! Head over to [this blog post](#) on how to calm a middle of the night panic attack in under 5 minutes, by my good friend and Certified Life Coach, Sharon Langert, or you may know her as the original Fashion-Isha.

Well there you have it! Please comment below if you have a tip not listed that worked for you or if a particular one worked better for you than others – would love to know!

*If, after trying everything mentioned, you still have problems falling asleep or staying asleep, there could be an underlying health issue that needs to be addressed. This is where a [one-on-one](#) consultation may be necessary.*

---