



Are you struggling with sleep?

Some of you may suffer from sleepless nights and know first hand what an impact it has to the quality of your life. There is much research about the insidious effects of poor sleep such as increased risk of obesity, heart disease and diabetes and shortening of life expectancy. Insomnia has many causes such as stress, too much screen time, overwork, as well as medical causes. Continuous sleepless nights overtime causes brain fog, lack of concentration leading to lack of clarity with decision making. Basically, your risks of having accidents increase.

How much sleep is enough?

Research has shown getting eight hours of 'good' quality sleep every night is the key to health, but this can vary for each person

What signs point to poor sleep?

Waking tired, can't keep your eyes open, complete lack of energy, total exhaustion and desire to eat sugary foods and caffeine based drinks to provide a quick energy boost. This cycle can be a vicious circle which eventually leads to health implications.

Need help? Read on...

The Facts

1. **Weight gain:** research has shown if you sleep less than 7 hours per night you may put on weight. Poor sleepers have reduced levels of leptin (chemical that signals you are full) and increased ghrelin (hunger - stimulating hormone) According to a 2004 study, people who sleep less than six hours a day were almost 30 percent more likely to become obese than those who slept seven to nine hours.
2. **Mental wellbeing:** long term sleep disorders lead to depression and anxiety. In a 2007 study of 10,000 people, those with insomnia were five times as likely to develop depression as those without. In fact, insomnia is often one of the first symptoms of depression.
3. **Diabetes:** risk of type 2 diabetes if you sleep less than 5 hours per night increases. The way your body processes glucose radically changes with sleeplessness.
4. **Lowers libido:** for men and women. Levels of testosterone is shown to be lower in men with insomnia. For men with sleep apnea, a respiratory problem that interrupts sleep, there may be another factor in the sexual slump. A study published in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism in 2002 suggests that many men with sleep apnea also have low testosterone levels. In the study, nearly half of the men who suffered from severe sleep apnea also secreted abnormally low levels of testosterone during the night.
5. **Immunity:** prolonged lack of sleep raids your immune system. In simple terms, sleep deprivation suppresses immune system function. The more all-nighters you pull, the more likely you are to decrease your body's ability to respond to colds or bacterial infections.
6. **Heart disease:** prolonged lack of sleep increases your heart rate which increases your blood pressure causing strain on the heart
7. **Fertility:** lack of sleep overtime causes imbalance in reproductive hormones
8. **Reduced cognitive function:** the brain needs sleep to process information, processing information & decision making can suffer.



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Get a better sleep tonight!

What are your bedtime 'rituals' to wind down?

Here's some suggestions:

- Take a **warm bath** (not too hot) try some epsom salts and a few drops of essential oil. Lavender is a good choice for sleep and calming.
- Write out **to do lists** for the next day so those thoughts are stored away for the night. Overthinking about tasks during the night won't get you anywhere.
- **Relaxation exercises**; light yoga, Yin style. Qi Gong, easy stretching. Work at a very easy pace, if you exercise vigorously it may have an energising effect.
- **Breathing exercise**: just running through a structured 2 to 5 minute breathing exercise will calm the mind and body.
- **Relaxing** music, a quiet audio book or hypnotic music.
- **Read** a book or **listen** to the radio with content that won't get you overthinking.
- Have a **wheat bag** at home? pop it in the microwave and relax your shoulders.

More ideas to consider:

- Upon waking, open the curtains to bring your **circadian rhythms** into balance. Consider a bedside light which wakes you with this type of light in winter time. (Lumie)
- **Consider a sleep schedule**. People who suffer from sleep disturbance are advised to go to bed at regular time every night. Our body gets into the habit of preparing to sleep at this time. An old wives tale tells us, the hours before midnight are twice as beneficial to us as the hours after midnight.
- **Sleeping in the right position?** Sleeping on our side will take the pressure off your internal organs. This can prevent illness later in life. Sleeping with the head pointing towards the north helps some people sleep more deeply as they are aligned with the earth's magnetic field.
- **Lighting!** Choose quieter 'mood' lighting when the sun sets in your home. You will feel more relaxed if the bright overhead lights aren't over your eye line. Dimmer switches are great!



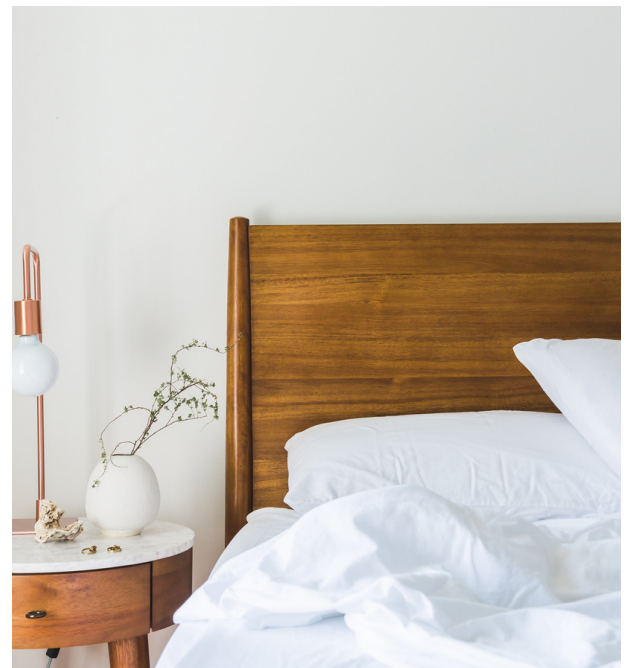
**Bedtime rituals can be
the key to a better
quality sleep**

More tips...

- **Candles:** not only do they provide soft lighting for a relaxing atmosphere but you can choose scented candles which are calming. Try to make sure you are buying candles poured from soy and beeswax, these won't contain paraffin.
- **Bedrooms:** experts claim there is a strong association in peoples minds between sleep quality and the bedroom. Ideally your bedroom should be tidy, quiet and kept between 18C to 24C.
- Choose a comfortable mattress & linens, this will help support a good night sleep. We all know this when we have stayed in a hot uncomfortable hotel room.
- Bedrooms should be used for **rest, sleep and sex**, the room shouldn't be used for work.
- **Sunlight:** are your curtains or blinds blocking enough light? In the longest days of the year this is quite important if you easily wake in the early morning.
- **Noise:** if you are disturbed by noise consider double glazing your windows or invest in a comfortable pair of ear plugs.

AVOID

- Don't use smart phones, tablets or other electronic devices an hour before bed. This is quite hard to do for most of us. If you want to view programs on a screen before bed invest in blue light glasses. We all spend too much time in front of screens everyday, over exposure may cause sleeplessness.
- **Alcohol:** although it is tempting to have that second glass of wine or beer alcohol can have a strong effect on your sleep. Try to limit or abstain from alcohol if you are really suffering from insomnia.
- **Caffiene:** it goes without saying too much coffee will cause sleeplessness. Yes, even one in the morning for some of you. I would suggest to stop for awhile and then retry a cup of coffee once you have a better sleep.
- **Eating after 8:00 pm:** Eating irregularly or late at night can cause poor sleep by putting a strain on the stomach and intestines which are having to digest food when they should be resting. Overeating rich foods, spicy foods and red meats might be the culprit to your sleeplessness
- **Overworking types:** If you work in a stressful environment, you might feel 'wound up'. Create a clear work day and turn off your work email and phone. Be clear with your team and boss what hours you work. You need to re-evaluate your evening ritual to strictly calming activities.



Looking for a sleepy scent? Try: lavender, sandalwood, bergamot, rose and jasmine

Sleep App's & Sleep Journal

Sleep applications:

- **Sleepio**

'Helps 76% of people achieve a healthy sleep', a research based application has been designed with a lot of science behind it. It asks you a series of questions to form a complete picture of your health and sleep patterns. With the use of cognitive techniques it will help support you through a program to achieve a better sleep.

- **Sleep cycle**

This app tracks your sleep cycle and is designed to wake you at the correct time so you feel naturally rested.

- **Headspace**

This app is considered a relaxation app for mindfulness but it has great 'wind down' programs to get your mind into rest mode. These are called 'Sleepcasts'

- **Noisli**

A white noise generator app that will help you focus and relax. Lots of customised mixes to choose from.

- **White Noise**

Another app which has 'soothing audio scapes' of nature that you can customise to your preferences.

Still not sleeping well? Try a sleep diary....

A diary will uncover lifestyle habits or experiences in your daily life that are likely contributing to poor quality sleep. A typical sleep diary would include the following questions:

- What were your sleeping times?
- How long did it take you to get to sleep?
- How many times did you wake up during the night?
- How long did each awakening last?
- How long did you sleep in total?
- Did you take any sleeping tablets?
- How well do you feel today?
- How enjoyable was your sleep last night?
- How much caffeine did you have before and after

5pm?

- How much alcohol did you have before and after

5pm?

- Did you do any exercise shortly before going to bed?
- Did you take any naps during the day or evening?
- Has anything made you anxious or stressed?

A sleep diary will reveal underlying conditions that may explain your unrestful sleep. This might be a step to take if you don't experience a shift in the next month.



A sleep diary might be the key to understand why you aren't getting a good night's sleep