



Top Tips for Sleep

1. About an hour before you plan on going to bed it is essential to 'wind down' from your day. At this stage reinstate a few activities that would have encouraged sleep in your childhood and are reminiscent of the cosy way you would have got ready for bed then; such as having a warm bath or shower, reading a gentle novel and sitting in bed to do this rather than letting the TV entertain you.
2. It is essential that the room is dark so that Melatonin is released. This is the hormone in the brain that makes you feel tired and ready for bed. If you cannot achieve this, consider lining your curtains with a thicker blackout curtain, using an eye mask and even ear plugs so that you can get complete peace for a period of time. If you find you are sleeping deeply for a few hours but waking too early then you either have a persistent problem on your mind or you have not manufactured enough Melatonin for sleep. You could consider supplementing your Melatonin (by ordering a tablet using the websites listed at the end of this guide), or make sure that you get out in the daylight enough during the day as it is daylight that enables us to make this vital hormone. If you do want to supplement it, Melatonin is a natural substance and should be taken approximately 30 minutes to an hour before bed time. Try not to delay the onset of sleep if you are ready to settle down because you will rev the system up again!
3. If you do have a persistent problem on your mind, consider using a pad of paper PRIOR to the hour wind down and write the problem down as succinctly as you can. Now follow these 3 steps: Can I change anything? (if so then what can you change, and write the actions), Can the situation be changed? (again write any actions), or Can I avoid any aspect?. Between these three questions some answers may become clear that will ease your stress and enable you to know that in the morning you'll action them; then turn the page over and be decisive about it. Your brain is a goal seeking tool, if you tell it to sleep it will; if you give it a problem to work out it will do that instead!
4. Try not to have any electrical items in the room; their buzzing even when turned off can disturb sleep. This applies to a bedside clock which should be dimmed at the least or turned away from you as the tendency to check it can be strong in a persistent insomniac. It will only make you anxious if you realise you haven't slept much or that there aren't many hours left to do so!

5. Try not to watch the TV an hour before bed, especially not lively News programmes, horror movies or reading stimulating e-mails. Many Execs think its ok to start work again after supper which might be at 8.00pm or 9.00pm at night; this hugely aggravates sleep patterns and can genuinely disturb you. Adrenaline may be triggered in to the system rather than Melatonin so it's the wrong time of day to try and work.
6. Do not drink caffeine after 4.00pm in the day. If you are out for dinner have half a cup if you must. Watch your caffeine intake overall as this can play a very large part in sleep problems. It is recommended that you do not drink more than 4 cups of tea or coffee in a day so if you are using it as a quick thirst quencher it will not do a good job. Switch SLOWLY to half strength or cut down particularly if you drink more than 10 cups a day. Caffeine is a drug to which many of us are addicted so it deserves respect when you want to come off it.
7. Try not to exercise after 7.00pm at night and if you do then reserve it for the more moderate forms such as walking the dog or a gentle swim (if you want to go to the gym). The principle is that activity of any sort is best kept for the daytime and although exercise is essential it is stimulating to the body and will 'rev' you up rather than wind you down. Try to exercise in the sunlight (but not the heat of the day), so that you enable Serotonin to be released in the brain, this will help you feel good and increase vitality. The exception to this rule is intimacy which can be very good for you but admittedly won't be a solution every night!
8. If you get indigestion at any time but particularly at night, avoid eating late whenever you can and drink 1 teaspoon of cider vinegar mixed in 1 teaspoon of water. It has a pleasant apple taste and will increase the stomach acid so that you can properly digest your food. Many people mistakenly think it is better to neutralise the acid in the stomach when they are uncomfortable, but indigestion only occurs where there is **insufficient** acid to do the job properly so if you supplement the amount the body is making then the stomach will do a better job.
9. Magnesium is a necessary mineral and stress uses up a lot of it in the system which can affect sleep. Look for powdered Magnesium at your local Vitamin store and take a 5mg dose (around one heaped teaspoon), in juice or water. It's quite bland and tastes ok. Do this approximately 20 minutes before bed and it will soothe the muscles and ease the tension in them.
10. Now lie down ready for sleep. I'd like you to try and think of a place in your mind that you've visited or that is reminiscent of a very nice, loving or warm place to be. Examples might be sandy beaches on holiday, warm fires after skiing, sitting on the settee with your kids when they are asleep on you – anything that is easy for you to remember and feels good. Try and think of a work that triggers this image for you quickly; make sure this isn't too generic, maybe 'sand' if it's a beach rather than holiday which could be anywhere. Whilst thinking of this place practice paying attention to your breathing – breathe in for a count of 5 slowly and breathe out for a

count of 5, pausing briefly at the bottom. We call this 5:2:5 breathing and it slows your heart to a comfortable level. For a few minutes before sleeping concentrate on your breathing whilst thinking of your favourite place and this will encourage your body to become ready for sleep. (If you wake during the night try this too).

Note: Being able to sleep well is important for well-being but a lot of the time we get ourselves uptight about not managing a consistent number of hours or sufficient depth of sleep. The truth is our sleep patterns change over time and whatever is happening in our lives, our age can make a difference, our lifestyle, and if we travel or are sensitive to changes in the seasons. It is not as important to try for the same number of hours a night as it is to feel well despite erratic sleeping habits. Look to adopt a regimen that becomes a discipline so that you encourage the best possible environment in order for sleep to be likely; we call it Sleep Hygiene. That way you've done everything you can — and if that doesn't work then consider a Sleep Centre that monitors you asleep and provides relevant information about what's happening to you when you try. Information on Sleep Centres in the U.K. and the U.S. are listed here along with how to find Melatonin and Magnesium.

MELATONIN:

In the U.K. try www.biovea.co.uk if your local Holland & Barratt doesn't have any

In the U.S. try www.vitaminLife.com or the Vitamin Shoppe has it in some places.

MAGNESIUM:

Try www.ighernature.co.uk for Magnesium called True Food Magnesium when you search for it. However this is in tablet form where the powder is absorbed more readily if you can get it.

In the US try www.vitaminLife.com and it is called Magnesium Oxide Powder

THE SLEEP CENTRES FOR OVERNIGHT MONITORING & INFORMATION ABOUT SLEEP:

In the UK if you need to find out more information about sleep centres please go to www.londonsleepcentre.com at 137 Harley Street where Dr Irshaad Ebrahim is a highly trained expert in disorders that disrupt sleep. He will undertake an initial consultation/ assessment and refer you to the Hospital to be monitored if necessary. Tel 0207 725 0524 if you prefer.

In the U.S. start with generic information as there are sleep centres in every city/ state www.sleepcenters.org is the place to start as they will point you in the right direction for a clinic somewhere near where you live.