

# Suggestions for a Better Night's Sleep

*Provided by*



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- #1 Eat three to four hours before bedtime to give your body time to digest your meal.** And nix your sugar fix to help stabilize blood sugar levels, ensuring a restful sleep, says Eric Berg, DC, author of 7 Principles of Fat Burning (KB Publishing, 2010). While you're at it, limit caffeinated foods to avoid the adrenaline kick that makes relaxation nearly impossible. Instead, choose a balanced evening snack that's rich in sleep-inducing minerals like calcium and potassium.
- #2 Consume foods that contain tryptophan at your evening meal.** Tryptophan, a sleep-inducing amino acid, is one of the essential 20 amino acids - because your body can't produce it on its own you must obtain it from your diet. Foods with a high tryptophan content are eggs, fish, soybeans, turkey, chicken, pumpkin seeds, nuts and cheese. Consume calcium at your last meal. Calcium helps the brain use and process tryptophan
- #3 Trade in warm milk for cherry juice.** We know your mom probably raised you on warm milk at bedtime, but the truth is, heated milk actually keeps you up instead of putting you down. The protein in milk lowers serotonin levels, making it difficult to fall asleep. Try this: 4 oz pure black organic cherry juice. Why? The carbs in cherry juice increase serotonin production, helping you drift off.
- #4 Enjoy a healthy carb at dinner.** Whole-wheat carbs or a small baked potato can boost the brain's sleep chemical serotonin without overloading the digestive system or sending blood sugar levels soaring. Try a whole-wheat dinner roll or a small baked potato. Healthy carbs also have the ability to clear away acids that may interfere with sleep-inducing tryptophan - further boosting your odds of a good sleep.
- #5 Stay away from too much garlic, chilis, cayenne pepper or any other fiery spices that may cause heartburn or indigestion before bedtime.** These may also amp up your metabolic rate a bit. Great for fat-burning but not exactly ideal for resting.
- #6 Avoid anything with monosodium glutamate (MSG).** MSG has been known to trigger strange dreams and nightmares and disrupt sleep. If you're eating clean, this one should be easy to avoid.
- #7 Save gaseous foods, such as beans, cauliflower, broccoli and Brussels sprouts, for lunch.** A system full of gas makes it difficult to sleep
- #8 Still tossing and turning? Try these natural remedies** for a good night's sleep. Take 1 or 2 tbsp of a liquid calcium- magnesium blend one hour before bed to nod off easier
- #9 Sip herbal teas formulated for sleep early enough before bed** so your bladder won't be bothered.

**#10 Say no to alcohol within two hours of bedtime.** A small glass of red wine with dinner is fine on occasion but more than one and close to bedtime will have you feeling drowsy initially but the alcohol will disrupt sleep throughout the night

**#11 Try to hit the hay before 11 pm.** Any later and you've missed your body's hormonal sleep clock, also known as the circadian rhythm

**#12 Get in some vigorous activity during the day.** If you can get outside for a brisk walk, that's even better. Your brain needs to sense daylight in order to create serotonin and melatonin, hormones that regulate sleep. But avoid exercising too late in the evening. Try some gentle yoga poses instead

**#13 Soak in a hot bath.** Use with a few drops of essential oils of lavender and chamomile along with two cups of Epsom salt for at least 20 minutes, recommends Mary Sahs, a Michigan-based naturopath. The oils are said to have a calming effect and the salt helps the body absorb magnesium, a mineral that provides relief from stress.

**#14 Turn off the lights.** Make sure your room is absolutely dark. Even with your eyes closed, your brain can sense light, which is a signal to wake up. For the same reason, don't turn on the light if you get up to use the bathroom.

**#15 Turn the temperature down.** Keep your room on the cool side and leave a window slightly open to allow fresh air to circulate. Never sleep with your mouth or nose under the covers, as this can cause morning headaches from reduced oxygen intake.

**#16 Clean up the clutter.** Remove stacks of magazines, laundry waiting to be folded, clothes that need mending and anything from under your bed. Feng shui experts say that clutter prevents the mind from letting go. The unconscious portion of your mind knows what's what and what's where, and it can affect your sleep.

**#17 Ban electronic items from your bedroom.** That means no television, no computer, no Blackberry, no cell phone. These are distractions, and the bedroom is a place of solace and rest

**#18 Stop using the snooze button.** Set your alarm clock for the time you really want to get up. It's much better to set the alarm 10 minutes later and sleep all the way through instead of waking yourself up twice.

**#19 Use an eye pillow to help block out the light.** (Try one with a lavender scent to enhance your relaxation potential.)

**#20 Make your bed cozy.** Use fresh, comfortable sheets, blankets to your liking, pillows that offer the right amount of support, and a mattress that is neither too hard nor too soft.

**#21 Get comfortable.** Place an extra pillow under your knees if you're a back sleeper or between your knees if you're a side sleeper. In either case, the action reduces stress on the lumbar spine, allowing you to relax fully.

**#22 Write in a journal before going to bed.** A wonderful exercise is to list 10 things you were grateful for that day and at least one thing you did that was a blessing for someone else. It's better than counting sheep!

**#23 Turn off the television and avoid reading anything too stimulating,** such as personal-development or self-help books, at least one hour before going to bed - or else you might find your head filled with ideas and to-do lists instead of sweet dreams.

#24 Stop working at least one hour before you go to bed. That means no computer, no BlackBerry, no email and no business- related reading (I know, it's tough to do, but you must). Otherwise, your subconscious may try to keep you awake, making you feel as though you've left your work undone.

**#25 Consider learning self-hypnosis.** "Self-hypnosis is one of the safest and most natural ways to get a good night's sleep," says Janice Manson, RN, MN, DCH, a Vancouver-based clinical hypnotist. Try this: Breathe in for four counts, pause briefly, then breathe out slowly for four counts, relaxing more deeply with each exhale.

**#26 According to sleep specialist Michael Breus, PhD, author of Beauty Sleep: Look Younger, Lose Weight and Feel Great Through Better Sleep(Plume, 2007), sleep deprivation lowers leptin,** the hormone that tells your body it's full, and increases ghrelin, the hormone that tells your body to eat. Think of the effects of chronic sleep problems over time. "Simply by regulating your sleep and getting it back on track you may experience weight loss," Breus says. He's seen patients lose between three and 15 pounds simply by getting 7.5 hours of sleep each night.

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