

# 30 Tips to Optimize Your Sleep

Dr. Mercola – February 6, 2024

## 7 Ways to Optimize Your Sleep Sanctuary

**1 - Sleep in complete darkness or as close to it as possible** – Even the tiniest bit of light in the room, such as that from a clock radio LCD screen, can disrupt your internal clock and your production of melatonin and serotonin, thereby interfering with your sleep (and raising your risk of cancer).

So, close your bedroom door, get rid of night-lights, cover any LCD screens and your windows. I recommend using blackout shades or drapes. A far less expensive alternative is to use a well-fitting sleep mask. Instead of a lighted alarm clock, I use a talking alarm clock, designed for the visually impaired, that audibly tells me the time by pressing a large button.

Also refrain from turning on any light at all during the night, even when getting up to go to the bathroom. If you absolutely have to have some sort of night light, use a red bulb.

**2 - Keep the temperature in your bedroom no higher than 70 degrees F** – Studies show the optimal room temperature for sleep is between 60 to 68 degrees F. Keeping your room cooler or hotter can lead to restless sleep. When you sleep, your body's internal temperature drops to its lowest level, generally about four hours after you fall asleep.

Scientists believe a cooler bedroom may therefore be most conducive to sleep, since it mimics your body's natural temperature drop. If you don't want to crank down the temperature on your air conditioning, sleeping naked may do the trick.

One of the established benefits of sleeping in the buff is improved sleep quality, in part by preventing overheating. One study showed a surface skin temperature difference of as little as 0.08 degrees F (or 0.4 degrees C) led to sounder sleep.<sup>24 2526</sup> Studies have also found sleeping in the nude has several other health benefits, including improved metabolism and blood circulation.

**3 - Eliminate electric and electromagnetic fields (EMFs) in your bedroom** – These can disrupt your pineal gland's production of melatonin and serotonin, and are a significant contributor to mitochondrial damage and dysfunction, which is at the heart of virtually all chronic disease.

EMF exposure has also been linked to neuronal changes that affect memory and your ability to learn.<sup>27</sup> EMFs harm your body's mitochondria by producing excessive oxidative damage, so sleeping in EMFs all night, every night, can cause or contribute to virtually any chronic ailment, including premature aging.

Another really important step is to turn off your Wi-Fi at night. It would be best to hard wire your home so you have no Wi-Fi 24/7 in your home, but I realize many are

unwilling or unable to take this step. It's important to realize that the Wi-Fi in your home is nearly always more of a danger to you than what's coming from outside your home. You can confirm this by measuring the microwave signals with a meter, and see what your exposure is. The fact is, you don't need Wi-Fi while sleeping, so this is a wholly unnecessary exposure that is easily remedied by turning it off.

**4 - Move alarm clocks and other electrical devices away from your bed, and avoid using loud alarm clocks** — If these devices must be used, keep them as far away from your bed as possible, preferably at least 3 feet. Keep your cellphone as far away from your bedroom as possible if it must be on. If you keep it in your bedroom, either shut it down or put it in airplane mode.

Also consider your chosen method of being awakened. It is very stressful on your body to be suddenly jolted awake. If you are regularly getting enough sleep, an alarm may actually be unnecessary, but gentler alternatives include a sun alarm clock, which wakes you up by gradually increasing the intensity of light, thereby simulating sunrise. Or even better use a battery powered alarm clock that talks so there is no electricity or light.

**5 - Adopt a neutral sleeping position** — If you're a side- or stomach sleeper and find yourself frequently tossing and turning at night and/or waking up with aches and pains, your sleeping position may be a primary culprit.

In the video below, chiropractor and exercise physiologist Dr. Peter Martone discusses the benefits of adopting a neutral sleeping position. The key to achieving this is to prop a pillow under your neck, not your head, as this allows you to maintain a proper spinal curve.

**6 - Reserve your bed for sleeping** — If you are used to watching TV or doing work in bed, you may find it harder to relax and drift off to sleep, so avoid doing these activities in bed.

**7 - Consider separate bedrooms** — Studies suggest that, for many people, sharing a bed with a partner can significantly impair sleep, especially if the partner is a restless sleeper or snores. If bedfellows are consistently interfering with your sleep, you may want to consider a separate bedroom. Pets may also need to be banished if their presence impair your sleep.

## **16 Tips on How to Prepare for Bed and Ease into Sleep**

**1- Get to bed as early as possible, ideally around 10 p.m.** — Your body (particularly your adrenal system) does a majority of its recharging between the hours of 11 p.m. and 1 a.m. In addition, your gallbladder dumps toxins during this same period.

If you are awake, the toxins back up into your liver, which can further disrupt your health. Prior to the widespread use of electricity, people would go to bed shortly after sundown, as most animals do, and which nature intended for humans as well.

**2 - Maintain a consistent bedtime** — Go to bed and wake up at the same times each day, even on the weekends. This will help your body to get into a sleep rhythm and make it easier to fall asleep and get up in the morning.

**3 - Establish a relaxing bedtime routine** — This could include meditation, deep breathing, using aromatherapy or essential oils or indulging in a massage from your partner. The key is to find something that makes you feel relaxed, then repeat it each night to help you release the tensions of the day.

**4 - Avoid drinking fluids within two hours of going to bed** — This will reduce the likelihood of needing to get up and go to the bathroom, or at least minimize the frequency.

**5 - Go to the bathroom right before bed** — This will reduce the chances that you'll wake up to go in the middle of the night.

**6 - Avoid eating at least three hours before bedtime, particularly grains and sugars** — These will raise your blood sugar, delay sleep and raise your risk of acid reflux. Later, when blood sugar drops too low (hypoglycemia), you may wake up and be unable to fall back to sleep.

Aside from that, eating too close to bedtime can harm your health in other ways. If you consume more calories than your body can immediately use, there will be an excess of free electrons, which back up inside your mitochondria.

These electrons are highly reactive and start to leak out of the electron transport chain in the mitochondria. These excess electrons wind up prematurely killing the mitochondria, and then wreak further havoc by damaging your cell membranes and contributing to DNA mutations. There's compelling evidence to suggest this type of mitochondrial dysfunction is one of the keys to accelerated aging.

**7 - Minimize use of electronics, both during the day and in the evening** —Electronic screens are major sleep thieves, robbing you of the ability to fall asleep quickly. Research has shown that the more time you spend on electronic devices during the day, and especially at night, the longer it takes to fall asleep and the less sleep you get overall. [28](#) [29](#)

Teenagers who used electronic devices such as MP3 players, video games, tablets, smartphones and/or computers for more than five hours a day were 3.5 times more

likely to get fewer than five hours of sleep per night. They were also 49% more likely to need more than an hour to actually fall asleep.

If you must use electronic screen devices late into the evening, install blue-blocking software.

**8 - Do some controlled breathing exercises** — Breathing is both an involuntary and a voluntary process. You can alter the speed and the depth of your breathing, and you can choose to breathe through your mouth or your nose.

These choices lead to physical changes in your body. Slow, deep and steady breathing activates your parasympathetic response while rapid, shallow breathing activates your sympathetic response, involved in releasing cortisol and other stress hormones.

The combination of controlled breathing with counting can be particularly effective when your mind refuses to shut down at night, as it gives your mind something to focus on. One breathing exercise involving counting that you could try is the 4-7-8 breathing technique taught by Dr. Andrew Weil. It's a potent remedy for anxiety, as it acts as a natural tranquilizer for your nervous system.

**9 - Take a hot bath or shower before bed** — When your body temperature is raised in the late evening, it will fall at bedtime, facilitating slumber. The temperature drop from getting out of the bath signals your body it's time for bed. It will also help if you finish your shower with a cold rinse.

Another alternative is to take a sauna followed by cold immersion in an unheated pool or shower, two to three hours before bed. This combination helps activate your parasympathetic nervous system to induce relaxation, allowing for sounder, deeper sleep.

**10 - Wear socks to bed** — Feet often feel cold before the rest of the body because they have the poorest circulation. At least one study has shown that wearing socks to bed reduces night waking. As an alternative, you could place a hot water bottle near your feet at night.

**11 - Wear an eye mask to block out light** — As discussed earlier, it is important to sleep in as close to complete darkness as possible. That said, it's not always easy to block out every stream of light using curtains, blinds or drapes, particularly if you live in an urban area (or if your spouse has a different schedule than you do). In these cases, an eye mask can be helpful.

**12 - Put your work away at least one hour before bed (preferably two hours or more)**  
This will give your mind a chance to unwind so you can go to sleep feeling calm, not hyped up or anxious about tomorrow's deadlines.

**13 - Avoid watching TV right before bed** — Even better, get the TV out of the bedroom or even completely out of the house. It's too stimulating to the brain, preventing you from falling asleep quickly. TV disrupts your pineal gland function. If you do watch TV, be sure to use blue light-blocking glasses after sunset as this will help maximize melatonin production.

**14 - Listen to relaxation CDs** — Some people find the sound of white noise or nature sounds, such as the ocean or forest, to be soothing for sleep. An excellent relaxation/meditation option to listen to before bed is the Insight audio CD.

**15 - Read something spiritual or uplifting** — This may help you relax. Don't read anything stimulating, such as a mystery or suspense novel, which has the opposite effect. In addition, if you are really enjoying a suspenseful book, you might be tempted to go on reading for hours, instead of going to sleep.

**16 - Journaling** — If you often lie in bed with your mind racing, it might be helpful to keep a journal and write down your thoughts before bed.

## **7 Lifestyle Suggestions That Enhance Sleep**

**1 - Reduce or avoid as many drugs as possible** — Many drugs, both prescription and over the counter, may adversely affect sleep. In most cases, the condition causing the drugs to be taken in the first place can be addressed by following guidelines elsewhere on my web site.

**2 - Avoid caffeine** — At least one study has shown that, in some people, caffeine is not metabolized efficiently, leaving you feeling its effects long after consumption. So, an afternoon cup of coffee or tea will keep some people from falling asleep at night. Be aware that some medications also contain caffeine (for example, diet pills).

**3 - Avoid alcohol** — Although alcohol will make you drowsy, the effect is short lived and you will often wake up several hours later, unable to fall back to sleep. Alcohol will also keep you from entering the deeper stages of sleep, where your body does most of its healing.

**4 - Exercise regularly, but not within three hours of bedtime** — Exercising for at least 30 minutes per day can improve your sleep. However, don't exercise too close to bedtime or it may keep you awake. Studies show exercising in the morning is the best if you can manage it.

**5 - Lose excess weight** — Being overweight can increase your risk of sleep apnea, which can seriously impair your sleep.

**6 - Avoid foods you may be sensitive to** – This is particularly true for sugar, grains and pasteurized dairy. Sensitivity reactions can cause excess congestion, gastrointestinal upset, gas and other problems.

**7 - Have your adrenals checked by a good natural medicine clinician** – Scientists have found that insomnia may be caused by adrenal stress. One of the best tests to assess adrenal function is the Dried Urine Test for Comprehensive Hormones (DUTCH) test, which involves collecting a small sample of your urine on a piece of filtered paper four times during the day.<sup>30</sup>

**If you are menopausal or perimenopausal, get checked out by a good natural medicine physician** – The hormonal changes at this time may cause sleep problems if not properly addressed.

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