



Sleep hygiene guidelines

Tips to Improve Sleep

Getting a refreshing night's sleep starts with good sleep preparation, experts recommend the following:

- Sleep in the dark (activates the sleep-inducing hormone Melatonin), quiet room. If necessary, mask ambient noises with a fan, very soft music or use earplugs.
- If you have not fallen asleep after 30 minutes, get up and sit quietly in another room. Do not fret about your lack of sleep. After 20 minutes, retire to bed again. Repeat as necessary. Known as stimulus control therapy, this approach to falling asleep helps reassociate the bedroom with restful sleep rather than stress over lack of sleep.
- Your body responds well to routine: go to bed and rise at the same times every day, even on weekends where possible.
- **Avoid caffeine, tobacco, sugary foods, chocolate and alcohol in the hours of preceding bedtime. Although alcohol can have a sedative effect, evidence suggests that it interferes with deep, restful sleep.**
- If you are taking energizing supplements such as: B vitamins, multivitamins or ginseng, **take them with breakfast** as later in the day can be too stimulating/keep you awake.
- Try relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, yoga, tai chi, or qigong.
- Avoid over stimulating the brain before bed – TV, computer work, computer games, etc. Read a book instead (may not be a Stephen King one though!)
- Install a computer program called 'f.lux'. This is a free computer program you can install on your computer and it removes the blue tones from your screen at night. It is this blue tone that suppresses melatonin and upsets your circadian rhythm and sleep patterns:
<https://justgetflux.com/>
- If you feel like ideas or thoughts are spiralling round and round in your mind, get up and right them on paper and retire back to bed with an 'emptier mind'.
- Follow a healthy and balanced diet and avoid eating after 8 pm.
- Exercise routinely during the day to improve onset and quality of sleep, but avoid late at night (too stimulating).
- Avoid napping during the day.
- Keep the bedroom temperature ideally between 15-20°C so that it is not too warm.
- Natural relaxing teas such as passionflower, chamomile or lemongrass can help promote a restful night's sleep.
- Lavender essential oil – dab a couple of drops on your pyjamas.
- Have an Epsom salts (magnesium sulphate) bath at least once a week (helps boost magnesium levels in the body) or take high-strength magnesium supplement nightly.
- Insomnia (sometimes accompanied by hot flushes/night sweats) can be a symptom of pre-menopause or menopause, in women. Please consult your naturopath to accurately assess your hormone status via a blood test.
- Get direct sunlight in your eyes when you wake up or go for a walk outside during lunchtime- this helps reset your circadian rhythm and natural sleep cycles