

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP

A GUIDE TO SLEEPING BETTER
FOR OPTIMUM HEALTH

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INTRODUCTION

In today's world our brains are working too fast and influenced heavily by technology, therefore it's crucial that we make sleep a priority to allow our brain and body to relax and recover each day.

When you have a baby, you nurture them with the best nutrition, sleep and love. This shouldn't change as you become an adult. All of these elements are important for our development through life.

1 in 3 adults experience poor sleep that negatively impacts their health. I've coached many people who have struggled with sleep and it appears to be a common issue for many. Not getting enough sleep can negatively affect your weight, cognitive function, relationships, sex and many other factors in your life including:

- Reduced levels of productivity
- Reduced alertness
- Increase in cortisol levels (stress hormone which can lead to weight gain)
- Increase in appetite making poor food choices
- Makes us more vulnerable, making poor judgements & decisions
- Can play a factor in road traffic collisions

In this guide we'll go through key elements that support a healthy sleep routine helping you gain better health long-term. It requires commitment, but will naturally become a routine that you no longer think about.

"A good laugh & a long sleep are the two best cures for anything"
- Irish Proverb

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Creating a sleep routine that works for you will help contribute to your overall health and happiness. Here are my tips on how to improve your sleep:

Good Nutrition

Eating well for your body and mind is something we should be very conscious of. If you own a diesel car and accidentally put petrol into it, what are the consequences? Not good, eh? We tend to look after our cars better than our own health, but to be fair that's down to perhaps a lack of education. As we've evolved fast food and ready meals have all been a marketing dream "to make our lives easier" when in fact they can be damaging to our health and wellbeing.

Our eating habits have a huge impact on our sleep patterns. When we experience poor sleep, we seek food and caffeine to fuel our fatigue, which is usually high carbohydrates and sugar. When we don't eat well or at the right times, we don't gain the deep sleep we need. Gaining better sleep will help balance your cravings and blood sugar reducing the urge for food that isn't nourishing.

Eat a balanced diet, lots of vegetables, protein, good fats and carbs. Reduce your sugar, alcohol and caffeine intake where you can. If you do drink caffeine, I would suggest reducing the amount and not drinking any past 1pm. Remember to always drink a glass of water before you have a coffee – *Hydrate before you caffeinate*. Try to avoid eating heavy meals at least 3 hours before bedtime.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Exercise

Your body needs daily movement. Try to work-out during the day; a long walk or run in natural light will enhance your vitamin D levels providing you with melatonin which helps your body recognise sleep signals. Burning energy through exercise will help your body relax and recover through sleep, naturally allowing yourself to go into a deeper sleep. It's also important to ensure you were sunscreen whilst outside to protect your skin from sunburn and pollutants.

Find workouts you enjoy and create a regular habit. Try to mix it up with different activities during the week.

Alcohol & Medication

When we drink alcohol or take medication, it can sometimes impact our REM 'dreaming' sleep which may result in fatigue or depression if done regularly.

A lack of sleep can also contribute to poor cognitive function which mirrors someone who would be under the influence of alcohol. There was a study done, that found people who had not slept enough had the same poor cognitive abilities that some would have if they were over the drink drinking limit. That's scary.

Try to reduce your consumption of alcohol to improve your sleep patterns.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Yoga & Meditation

Some light yoga stretches morning and evening help to break up the "fuzz" fascia, mobilising your body. This is especially important as we get older, to eradicate any stiffness from our joints keeping us mobile. If you work in a sedentary job; at a desk or driving then it's really important to stretch your body out to maintain mobility and avoid injury.

I would recommend at least 5-10 mins of Meditation every day to bring calmness to your mind and body. Meditation can help create balance of your cortisol (stress hormone) levels, lower blood pressure, increase grey matter in the brain and aide premature aging.

It's important to note when starting a meditation practice, it takes time to learn so be patient with yourself. It's an opportunity for you to connect with your breath and take your brain to the gym. Our brain needs time off, therefore Meditation provides us with a level of calmness and clarity surrounding our thoughts.

When thoughts enter your mind during meditation, don't be disheartened, simply acknowledge them and thank them; then visually nudge them to the side to deal with at a later stage. Be patient in your practice, it will come.

FINDING YOUR BEDTIME ROUTINE

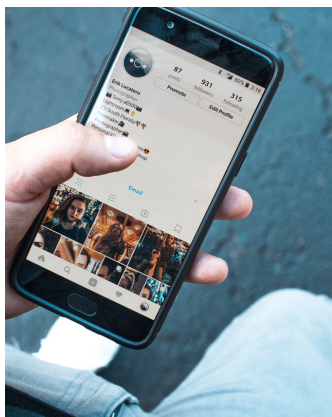


TIMING

Try to go to bed at the same time every night and wake up at the same time every day. It will help maintain consistency and provide your body with a natural rhythmic clock. For example: go to bed each night at 10pm and wake at 6am which gives you 8 hours sleep. This can be adjusted to suit your lifestyle. Aim to have at least 6-8 hours per night.

JOURNAL

Writing how your day was and showing gratitude for what went well helps us assess our day and get all thoughts on paper so it doesn't disrupt our sleep. This includes all worries, write them down. It's a great opportunity to plan the next day, so you don't worry during the night. Don't carry your emotions into bed, leave them in your journal to make space for a peaceful sleep.



DIGITAL DETOX

Try to limit your use of technology at least 1-2 hours before bed. Blue light affects the production of Melatonin in the body which is the hormone that helps our body become sleepy. Therefore, leave your phone in another room or switch to airplane mode. I'd recommend a traditional alarm clock, leaving your phone switched off in another room. It helps reduce the habit to look at your phone first thing in the morning.



Bedtime Rituals

Other things you could add to your routine could include:

- Have a bath: use Epsom salts which has magnesium bringing calmness & balance your nervous system. Stay in the bath for at least 20 mins for it to take effect.
- Read a book: it will help you relax & naturally prepare you for sleep.
- Spray a lavender pillow mist on your pillows.
- Wear a sleep eye mask.
- Ensure you have a good quality mattress & pillows.
- Ensure your bedroom is a cool temperature, don't sleep with the heat on.
- Have blackout curtains or blinds in your bedroom to keep out unwanted light.
- Drink a herbal tea after dinner; chamomile, fennel or peppermint are all known for calming effects.

Creating your sleep routine

So, now that you've absorbed all of the above information, let's get cracking in creating the sleep routine that works for you.

- Identify where you are currently & what steps you would like to introduce to see change
- Try one thing at a time
- A habit can take 21 days to form. Be patient with yourself.
- Make your sleep a priority: create with intention
- Plan your timings in your calendar each day
- Remove your phone from the bedroom.
- Get a traditional alarm clock.



THANK YOU

For taking the time to read this sleeping guide. I hope it helps you find the sleep you deserve contributing to a full & healthy life.

Sleep well & dream better
Stacey x

*Start where you are.
Use what you have.
Do what you can.
- Arthur Ashe*

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