

Preparing for Restful Sleep

After a day of stimulating activity your body is ready for and needs deep sleep. Aim for six to eight hours of nightly sound slumber without the need for any medication. Hours of sleep before midnight are generally the most rejuvenating. Therefore, if you are sleeping eight hours between 10 pm and 6 am, you will feel more rested than sleeping eight hours between midnight and 8 am. To promote restful sleep, try the following routine:

Daytime Routine

- Try to get outside for ten to twenty minutes of mid-day sunlight exposure to help the body align with natural rhythms.
- Do not regularly nap during the daytime unless you are ill or convalescing. If you do need to nap make it short (less than 30 minutes) and do not nap after 4 pm.
- Have a regular daily routine that includes physical activity. Avoid exercise after 7 pm as this may be too stimulating.
- Minimize the use of stimulants such as caffeine. Caffeine is found in coffee (regular and decaffeinated), tea (white, green, black, oolong and tea blends which contain those such as Earl Grey), colas, some non-cola sodas, chocolate, energy drinks, guarana, and yerba mate. Some over-the-counter weight loss pills, pain relievers, headache and cold medications also contain caffeine.
- Meditate in the morning and in the afternoon/evening.

Evening Routine

- Eat a relatively light dinner. This should be no later than 7 pm so you do not go to bed on a full stomach.
- Take a leisurely stroll after dinner.
- To the extent possible, minimize exciting, aggravating or mentally intensive activities after 8:30 pm. This includes television and work activity, if what you are watching or doing makes you feel stimulated, irritated or tense. Also, blue light emitted from screens (TV, smartphone, computer, tablet, light bulbs) is stimulating and suppresses the body's natural release of melatonin, a substance which helps with day-night regulation.
- Keep alcohol to a minimum and do not drink within 2 hours of going to bed.
- Avoid taking stimulating supplements (such as B12) or medications in the evening.



Bedtime

- Create a haven for rest and relaxation in your bedroom. Use blackout curtains or an eyemask. Do not watch TV or do work in bed and reduce clutter in the room. For those sensitive to electromagnetic fields, reduce electronics in the bedroom particularly near the head of the bed.
- Aim to be in your bed with the lights out between 9:30 pm and 10:30 pm. If you are not used to getting to bed this early, move your bedtime up by half an hour every week, until you are in bed by 10:30 pm. For example, if you usually watch television until midnight, try shutting it off by 11:30 for a week. Then aim for 11 pm for another week, and finally, 10:30 pm.
- About an hour before bedtime, run a hot bath into which you place a few drops of a calming aromatherapy essential oil such as lavender, sandalwood or vanilla. You can also diffuse this scent in your bedroom. Scented products (candles, rupas, incense) for balancing Vata or Pitta are designed to calm and soothe and are recommended.
- As your bath is running, perform a slow self-administered oil massage using sesame or almond oil. Self-massage oil from the Chopra Center (Relaxing Abhy Oil) is a blend of nourishing oils for the skin and essential oils calming to the mind and is recommended.
- After your massage, soak in the warm tub for ten to fifteen minutes.
- While soaking, have the lights low or burn a candle, and listen to calming, soothing music.
- After your bath, drink something warm. It can be a cup of warm milk with honey and nutmeg and/or cardamom or some relaxing herbal tea. Chamomile, valerian root, lemon balm and passion flower are particularly calming.
- If your mind is very active, journal or practice recapitulation for a few minutes before bed, “downloading” some of your thoughts and concerns so you don’t need to ruminate about them when you shut your eyes.
- Read inspirational or spiritual literature for a few minutes before bed. Avoid dramatic novels or distressing reading material.
- Once in bed, close your eyes and simply “feel your body” – this means bring your attention into body and wherever you notice tension, consciously relax that area.
- Then, simply watch your slow easy breathing until you fall asleep.



Contingency Plan

- Guided meditations, self-hypnosis, and music that helps get the mind to a relaxed state can be helpful. Here are a few examples:
 - “Blissful Sleep” MP3 and “Sleep Meditation” app by Deepak
 - “Sleep Help” app and “Healthful Sleep” CD/MP3 by Healthjourneys
 - “Deep Sleep” self-hypnosis CD by Steven Gurgevich
 - “Delta Sleep” by Jeffrey Thompson
- If you still have trouble falling asleep, try putting something warm on your belly in the area of your solar plexus. Use a warm water bottle or heating pad to soothe your body and calm your mind.
- Try silently repeating the sleeping mantra:
 - Om Agasthi Shahina (Ōm Ah-gah’-stee Shah-ee’-nah).
- Try sleeping on your stomach with your feet hanging over the edge of the bed. On cold night, wear socks so your toes stay warm.
- If you are unable to fall asleep within 15 to 30 minutes and do not feel relaxed get up and out of bed and do something relaxing.
- If you wake up during the night and have trouble going back to sleep, try reclining in a soft, comfortable chair with a blanket. You may find it easier to drift off in a slightly upright position.
- If all else fails and you continue to have disrupted sleep, try staying up all night and avoid napping the following day. By 9 pm the next evening, your mind and body will be ready to sleep. This can often reset your biological rhythms.
- Certain nutrients and herbal formulations may be recommended by your physician.

It is helpful to remember that if you are lying still in bed, silently repeating the sleeping mantra, your metabolic activity is nearly as low as if you were in deep sleep. Even if your mind is still somewhat active, your body is getting the deep rest it needs. Therefore, do not worry if you are not immediately falling asleep, and by not worrying, you will quickly drift off into a deep slumber.

