

THE SANCTUARY of SLEEP

1. Have a routine bedtime each night: fall asleep by 10 p.m. as late nights are drying and rob your body of subtle digestion time, and there is no antidote for lost sleep. Make sure to get at least 7 (pref 8) hours of sleep/night.
2. Apply warm organic sesame oil to head and soles of feet before bed (sesame in winter, coconut in summer unless otherwise directed). If you have difficulty with sleep, apply a warm oil massage (2 oz.) for ten minutes to entire body and leave on 10-15 mins. before bed, wear old pajamas, shower in a.m. This supports sleep, hormone balance and the immune system! See this video: <https://www.banyanbotanicals.com/info/ayurvedic-living/living-ayurveda/lifestyle/self-oil-massage/>
3. Adjust temperature in sleeping place. Having room on cooler side to match your lowered body temp is best.
4. Warm (almost to boiling) whole (preferably raw or non-homogenized) milk spiced with a pinch each of nutmeg, cardamom, turmeric (and a couple threads of saffron if you have it) before bed. Milk has serotonin and is a “food medicine” for sleep. Almond milk can be substituted, but milk has peptides that lower cortisol and support healthy sleep. You can add ¼-1/2 tsp Bacopa monnieri (brahmi herb) to the milk (or use Golden milk recipe).
5. The brain and nervous system are >60% fat and they need good fats to function properly. Ghee is best, 1-2 tsp a day. Ghee is called clarified butter and does not have milk solids or lactose and also does not elevate cholesterol levels. You can put it in your warm or hot cereal in the morning, too. Flaxseed oil, olive oil are alternatives.
6. Avoid processed foods including sugars, yeasted and processed grains. Avoid MSG, food dyes, coloring, artificial flavors and artificial sweeteners: these all act as “excitotoxins” = neurotoxins.
7. Make sure to have at the very least 30 minutes (preferably an hour if you have sleep problems) outdoors exercise each day to help naturally with circadian rhythm and sleep cycle. Make sure to take vitamin D if your levels are low or in winter to supplement for lack of sunshine.
8. Wind down before bed. Between 7-10 pm, the nervous system needs to wind down.
 - a. Avoid watching TV or being on computer or electronics (including e-books) at least 1-2 hrs. before bed as they stimulate nervous system and block natural melatonin production (which induces sleep).
 - b. Avoid caffeine anytime after noon. It has an 8 hour half-life.
 - c. Avoid alcohol in the evening: first, it is a stimulant, then a central nervous system depressant, that will cause maintenance insomnia and suppression of non-REM sleep.
 - d. Avoid sleeping pills as they work by sedating the brain and suppressing non-REM sleep, thus they cause daytime drowsiness, memory loss and increased risk of multiple diseases including cancer and dementia.
 - e. Avoid electronics in the bedroom. Make sure room is dark.
 - f. Avoid eating late, heavy dinners. Eat last meal >3 hours before bed. Have lukewarm or room temp water with meals. Make lunch your largest meal of the day.
 - g. Avoid exercising within 2-3 hours of bed as it increases adrenaline and cortisol and delays onset of sleep.
 - h. Avoid naps after 3 pm. Keeps naps to half hour or less. They can be very helpful!
 - i. Consider yoga nidra (guided relaxation tapes) on Insight Meditation app. (or other) before bed. These have been shown to induce the relaxation response. Can be used if you have maintenance insomnia.
 - j. Consider legs up the wall pose, breathing slowly into belly, for ten mins. before getting into bed.
 - k. Consider a meditation practice to start your day in the morning.
 - l. Consider doing a restorative yoga class once weekly to train your nervous system on what total relaxation is and to promote healthy sleep.
 - m. Consider listening to music, playing music, singing, reading something pleasant, walking your dog, using aromatherapy with oils of lavender, rose, jasmine, neroli in bedroom before sleep. These relax CNS.
 - n. Consider taking a warm bath (after oiling) before bed with the oils mentioned in “l.”

Disclaimer: A sleep disorder is broadly defined as a physical or psychological problem that impairs your ability to sleep or causes increased sleepiness during the day. Everyone experiences sleep problems from time to time. However, you might have a sleep disorder and should consult your physician if:

1. You regularly experience difficulty sleeping three nights weekly for three months or more.
2. You are often sleepy during the day, or have impaired ability to perform regular daytime activities even if you’ve slept 7-8 hours.
3. Your partner/other has told you that you snore loudly and sometimes stop breathing.
4. Note: The American Medical Association no longer suggest sleeping pills as a first line treatment for insomnia. Make sure to be referred to a sleep specialist before considering taking sleeping pills.

REFERENCES: [Why We Sleep](#) by Matthew Walker, PhD, [Perfect Health](#) by Deepak Chopra, [Balance Your Hormones](#), [Balance Your Life](#) by Dr. Claudia Welch.