

Dr. Katie's

Tranquil Sleep Guide

Naturally Better Sleep



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Sleep. It's something we take for granted when it's there and agonize about when its gone. Sleep is key to good health, increasing focus, mood, productivity and libido while decreasing risks for diabetes and heart disease. Most adults need between 7-9 hours of sleep each night to feel rested. Unfortunately, many aspects of modern living derail our inner rhythms that promote good sleep. This guide outlines some of the behaviors you can modify to help yourself get your best night's sleep by promoting your natural sleep biology.

Start Early

Good sleep starts with things you can do during the day!

- Wake up regularly. Getting up at the same time each morning helps ensure you will be tired and ready for a good nights sleep at the same time each night.
- See some sunlight. Spend some time in the morning getting some sunlight. Sit by a sunny window to drink your morning coffee or go for a short walk outside and soak in the sunlight.
- Make sure to move. Exercise, especially earlier in the day, can help increase your feeling of fatigue at night and help you fall asleep and stay asleep. Just make sure to exercise within your own tolerance, as overexertion and pain may actually keep you up instead!

Create A Bedroom Oasis

Is where you sleep somewhere you want to be? Do you find it relaxing to be there? Is it dark? The best environment for sleep is quiet, dark, and used for that purpose. The following tips can be used to make your bedroom more tranquil.

- Remove any work or workspaces from the bedroom. Reserve your bedroom for sleep and other relaxing and enjoyable activities.

- Clear any clutter. Physical clutter creates mental clutter. Keeping your room organized will help with your sleep mindset.
- Kick out the screens. Eliminate TVs, Tablets and Cell Phones from your bedroom. Watch TV in other spaces in the house. Plug in your phone in a different room to avoid it from interfering with your sleep.
- Create a dark room. Screen removal will help with this. Invest in curtains or drapes to block street light.
- Minimize disruption. If your pet wakes you in the night, train them to sleep somewhere less disruptive such as a pet bed or crate. If noise from family members disrupts your sleep, a white noise machine at a low setting or a fan may be helpful.

Mind Your Melatonin

Are you making the most of your natural sleep hormone? Melatonin isn't something most people need to take as a supplement to sleep well - it's something your body can produce on its own to facilitate good sleep. These practices help your body produce enough of its own melatonin.

- Turn Down the Lights. In the evening, well before bedtime, begin to dim the lights of your home. Install and use dimmer switches or turn off overhead lights and use lamps with lower wattage bulbs.
- Moderate Screen Usage. Many people enjoy watching television, catching up on social media, or playing computer/phone games before bed. Unfortunately, light from these devices negatively impacts both time and quality of sleep. Minimize this by setting a period of time where you do not use your devices before bed.
- Check your room for darkness. Cover any sources of light and turn any clocks towards the wall so the light does not pollute your sleep.
- Leave your phone out of your bedroom. If you wake during the night and look at your phone, the melatonin you've worked so hard to encourage will begin to be degraded within 3 seconds of looking at your phone, making it much more difficult to fall back asleep.

Condition Yourself

Good sleep is a combination of hormones and habits, make the most of them by having a bedtime routine and conditioning yourself, both physically and psychologically, for a goodnight sleep.

- Set a bedtime. A regular sleep-wake cycle, with a regular bedtime and wake time helps your body maintain a 24 hour cycle. This helps your cortisol to rise normally in the morning and wake you up!
- Say goodbye to your day. Complete things that make you feel like the day is done and you are ready for the next one. Perhaps there is something you like to have clean and tidy before bed, or a self care practice such as journalling or meditation that helps you to let go of your day.
- Relax. Fill the final portion of your evening before bed with something that helps calm your mind and body. Coloring, meditation, taking a warm bath or shower or having a cup of tea are all things that can help the transition from day to night.

What about Supplements?

Honestly, with a good sleep routine most people do not need supplements to sleep well. However, if you are following these recommendations and still not waking rested it's possible that supplements may help. It's best to chat with your naturopathic doctor before starting a sleep supplement, especially if you take any medications, to make sure they can be taken safely together. Not all sleep problems can be treated with supplements and different sleep supplements act in different ways. A naturopathic doctor can match your sleep experience to the right supplement, if appropriate, and can recommend other treatments for insomnia.