

The Ultimate Sleep Kit

11 Steps to the Perfect Night's Sleep



Sleep is a force multiplier.

It magnifies *everything*. If there is disease in your body and you are sleep **deprived**, the disease will progress much more quickly.

Conversely, if your body needs repair (and it *always* needs repair) your capacity for repair is magnified when sleep is abundant.

“Guard your sleep cycle jealously”.

Those were the first words my doctor told me when I started my recovery from bacterial meningitis in 2011. I was a mess. I had dropped 30 pounds of muscle mass, had neuropathy in my extremities, nauseous, terrible headaches and difficulty walking.

To make matters worse, I had the added stress of being the sole income earner in our household. The story ends well...you are reading this e-book. There is a short video [HERE](#) that summarizes the story and it comes with a confession from one of my patients – “Pam”.

Lack of sleep has reached epidemic proportions in western culture and it is now estimated that insomnia is the #1 health related problem in the USA and Canada.

Some warm and fuzzy stats...

- 60 million sleeping pill prescriptions were filled out in the USA last year.
- From 2000-2004 the number of adults using sleeping pills has in fact DOUBLED.
- The proportion of CHILDREN aged 1-19 taking prescription sleep medication has risen 85%.
- More than half the adult population in Canada reports trouble sleeping every night.
- 43% report that tiredness interferes with their regular daytime activities.

I can't say it's all that surprising.

Our culture is productivity *obsessed* and time-eating activities like checking Facebook and watching YouTube - our attention is becoming increasingly segmented.

We've forgotten the importance of a good night's sleep and how to get it.

First Off...Why is Sleep so Important?

Most people know we need it but not many understand the extent to which sleep affects bodily functions.

If you don't get proper sleep it will magnify the effects of stress and simply destroy your body. You will die of total sleep deprivation before you die of starvation.

Take a peek at some of the carnage sleep deprivation wreaks.

- ❖ Cellular Repair – Human Growth Hormone is produced in large quantities during sleep. This means it is during sleep that most of your body systems recover and cellular regeneration occurs. – **Sleep makes you age faster.**
- ❖ Immune Activity – Your immune system is most active during sleep. A study at the University of California found that even a modest loss of sleep weakens the immune system's response to disease and injury.
- ❖ Memory and Problem Solving – Sleep is vital for the transformation of short-term memory to long-term memory.

Do you want to smoke your next exam?

Don't pull the all-nighter – go to bed!

- ❖ Mood and Mental Health – It is well known that insomnia is associated with depression.

There is a clear reason why.

Lack of sleep shuts down your pre-frontal cortex. This can cause or worsen a number of psychological conditions including PTSD, depression and anxiety.

- ❖ Inflammation – Lack of sleep results in increased levels of cortisol (a major stress hormone) in your blood stream.

What's the big deal?

This creates low-grade inflammation throughout your body and it is very clear that inflammation is associated with most modern degenerative diseases like, heart disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, inflammatory bowel disease and cancer.

- ❖ Weight Control – Sleep deprivation makes you fat. Recent studies show that just ONE night of poor sleep results in dramatic changes to appetite and food intake.
 - a. Reducing your sleep to 5hrs/night for 7 days impairs carbohydrate tolerance and insulin sensitivity - a major contributor to Type I Diabetes.
 - b. Sleep deprivation is believed to be the single best predictor of obesity in children.

- c. A recent study shows that a lack of sleep is linked to fatty liver disease.

...I could go on.

“Nerd-Alert” – this next section contains physiological explanations that you don’t really need to know. It is included for ‘nerd’ purposes only. If you prefer, you can skip to the “Bright Lights” heading.

Our body has a natural sleep/wake cycle that is regulated (mainly) by the hormones cortisol and melatonin. During the day when the sun is shining, our body releases cortisol to prepare us for daily activities.

As the afternoon comes and the light reduces, cortisol drops, allowing melatonin to rise. This prepares us for sleep and repair. Most of our physical repair occurs between 11pm and 2am as melatonin levels rise.

Psychological repair and memory formation typically take place between 2am and 6am.

...that will conclude the NERD ALERT at this time.

Factors that Interfere With the Sleep Cycle

Bright Lights

Bright lights make our body think it is daytime and time to get ready for daily activities. In response, your body will release cortisol and suppress melatonin to prepare you for the anticipated activity. This not only makes it hard to fall asleep but reduces the repair that will occur during sleep.

Stimulants

Caffeine, sugar and tobacco are all stimulants, which excite your adrenal glands and triggers the release of cortisol.

Caffeine has a half-life of about 6 hours. A typical cup of coffee has approximately 300 mg of caffeine – which means that by 9pm you will still have 150 mg of caffeine in your system. Six hours later, when you are supposed to be in the middle of your repair cycle, you still have 75 mg of caffeine in your bloodstream, which elevates cortisol and suppresses melatonin (the repair hormone).

Adding sugar to your nighttime routine creates fluctuations in blood sugar levels. This can be interpreted as “stress” to your brain and your body always releases cortisol when it is stressed. Wakey Wakey!

Electromagnetic Pollution

This type of pollution is emitted from hundreds of items in our environment including TV's, electric blankets, Wi-Fi, cell phone signals and other electrical appliances. These signals are thought to stimulate our stress response and cortisol release.

Dehydration

Self explanatory.

You need to be well watered. When you are not, it stresses your body and sleep....is not going to happen – and when it does, it is fitful.

“I can take it.” – Uhm, no you can't.

Does this sound like you?

A lot of people think they can train themselves to need less sleep. “I'm used to it”. The truth is, you might be “used to it” in that you develop coping mechanisms to deal with the fatigue, but your body misses out on the repair stages of sleep.

10 STEPS TO THE PERFECT SLEEP

1. Strive for 7-8 hours of sleep.

Maximize the repair time. Plenty of gurus are teaching that you should trade in your sleep for your goals. True if you are sleeping the day away. False if that means going to bed late and getting up early.

Interested in a “Life-Hack” that helps make this happen?

Your sleep will improve if you get in the habit of going to bed and getting up at the same time every day.

Not just during the week, but on weekends too. After a couple of weeks you will notice that you will fall asleep more easily....and stay asleep.

2. Sleep in a completely dark room.

Light exposure to the skin and eyes increases cortisol production and suppresses melatonin.

Dark room = deeper sleep.

3. Avoid Blue Light Before Bed (and during the night).

Screens from computers, smart phones and TV's emit lights across the spectrum. Blue light is particularly stimulating to your body. Dim the lights 1-2 hours before bed.

Want an app for that?

There is an app you can install on your web browser called f-lux. You can get it [HERE](#). I have it on all my computers and it will cut out all the blue light from your computer monitor. Read the instructions carefully. If you are unable to install apps onto your computer at work, ask your IT department to help you do it manually.

In addition – resist the temptation to use your phone as an alarm clock. If you wake up at night, there is an awful temptation to look at your phone and check email....so wrong on so many levels....and it wakes you up.

4. Avoid Stimulants After 3pm.

Remember the section that referred to caffeine half-life? That's why.

5. Avoid Alcohol Within 4 Hours of Bedtime.

More than 2 glasses of wine in the evening has been found to significantly interfere with deep sleep cycles. You might “pass-out” but your sleep quality is poor.

6. Avoid Sugar Just Before Bed.

Remember the section on blood sugar crashing and how that stimulates the stress response and cortisol production? When you eat sugar before bed, and the high crashes after you fall asleep, you will wake up hungry.

I like to snack after dinner sometimes. Choose some healthy fats or protein like a handful of cashews. If I decide to finish with a sweet, I will sneak a small square of dark chocolate. One small square. 😊

If I have a strong sweet tooth in the evening, I find brushing my teeth will kill the craving.

7. Cool Your Room

Ever have a great sleep on a hot muggy night and no air conditioning? Didn't think so. Studies show the ideal temperature is 19-21 *C. Personally, I don't crank the AC during the day...I let the house get a little warm. But when the sun goes down, the AC has a much easier time cooling the house.

8. The Foam Roller

You can buy them in any sports store or fitness shop. They are a great way to sooth muscles, release tension and push stagnant blood from your legs, back into circulation. It's odd but despite the sense of invigoration from the foam roller, I always sleep better when I use it right before going to bed.

Last time I was at Winners, I saw some for as little as \$15 or you can get a better quality one that will last for about \$35. If you aren't sure how to use one, click [HERE](#) for a video tutorial on my website.

9. Turn OFF the Antennae

Electromagnetic pollution. Keep it away from your head at night. I don't have the research for this one but I have noticed it has made a difference for me.

Wi-Fi is turned off.

I use my cell as an alarm clock...yes I know....I NEVER look at it. Ever. I like it because it emits almost no light unlike most alarm clocks that are so bright. Set the phone to airplane mode, turn off the Bluetooth and make sure the Wi-Fi setting is turned off as well.

10. Magnesium Citrate.

It is nicknamed nature's muscle relaxant.

I am not big on supplements. There are very few I recommend on a regular basis.

We should be able to get enough magnesium from our diet but many of us do not. When our magnesium levels are low, one of the reactions we have is increased muscle tension.

Taking 300 mg of Mg before bed has helped me when I have a lot of muscle tension.

DISCLAIMER TIME! Consult your health professional before taking any supplements and do not consider this document as a consultation.

Ok, now that that is done....

PS – here are some foods that are high in [magnesium](#).

11. Chiropractic Care.

One of the most common side-benefits that are reported by people who receive Chiropractic care is that their sleep has improved. Some people go home after their adjustment visit, have a long nap and STILL sleep through the night.

When the spine is locked-up, it puts a stress on your nervous system and cortisol is released. Unlock the spine....body relaxes, nervous system is less stressed. Cortisol down – melatonin up. Nighty Night!

What should you do next?

1. Commit to these steps for the next two weeks. Guard your sleep cycle jealously. Wise words.
2. If you are under enough stress that you aren't sleeping well, consider calling my office for a complimentary 15 min consultation. We will review your health history and determine if we can help you! (613) 224 5400

In health,

