

 VITACOST.COM

The Ultimate Guide to Healthy Sleep



**How sleep affects health
+ how to make sure you're
getting enough**

ALL (you) (NEED) IS sleep

Sleepy?

According to the CDC, over one-third of adults in the U.S. are not getting enough sleep on a regular basis.

If you're ready to make good sleep a regular thing, you've come to the right place! In this e-book, we've assembled critical and expert information about healthy sleep, from why it's important and how to make sure you're getting enough to tips for falling and staying asleep and what supplements might support your goals.

Whether you're struggling to get enough shut-eye, a snorer trying to figure out how to stop or a parent concerned about your child's habits, you'll find the information you need to help you along your journey to better sleep.

Sweet dreams,
The Vitacost Team

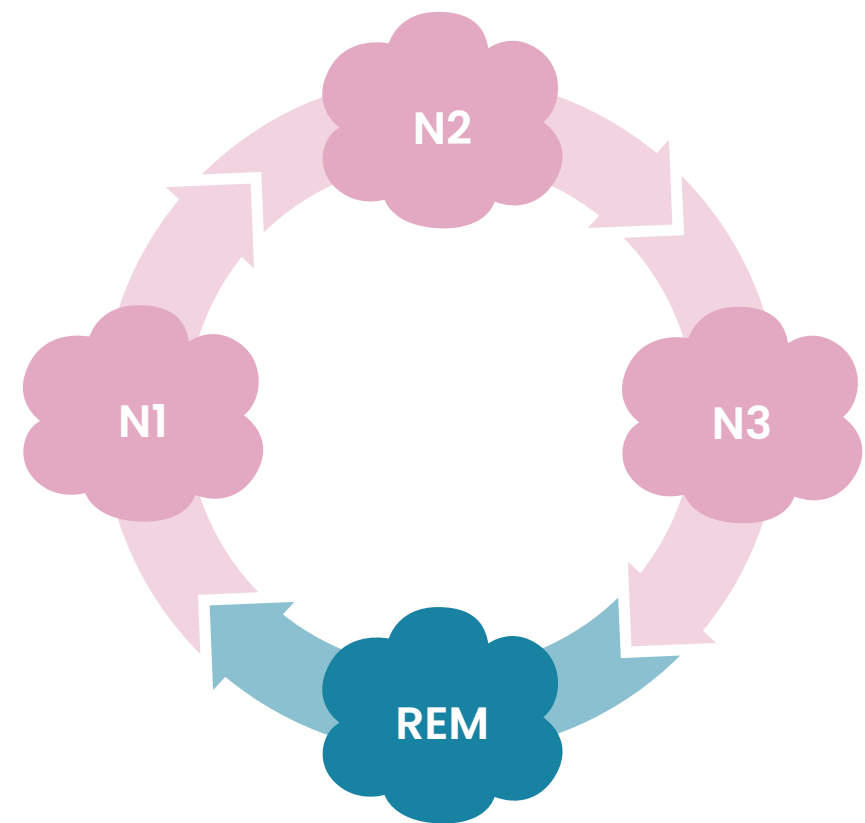
Table of Contents

☾

The Science of Sleep: How it Works & Why You Need it		Tips for Sleeping Better with a Partner	16
What Are the Stages of Sleep?	4	Foods to Avoid at Night	18
How Much Sleep Do You Need?	5	Recipes to Help You Sleep	20
5 Things that Happen When You Sleep	6	The Best Essential Oils for Better Sleep	22
Beauty Benefits of Sleep	7	How to Use Essential Oils	23
The Scientific Link Between Sleep and Weight	8	Yoga Poses for Better Sleep	24
Sleep and Exercise	9	What is Melatonin?	26
How Different Sleep Positions Affect Your Health	10	Possible Side Effects of Melatonin	28
		More Supplements to Help You Unwind	29
How to Get Better Sleep: Habits, Tips & Remedies		Kids & Sleep	
How to Get Better Sleep	12	Is Your Child Getting Enough Sleep?	30
How to Keep a Sleep Log	13	How to Make Sure Kids Get Enough Sleep	31
Why People Snore and How to Stop	14	Acknowledgements	32
Snoring Remedies	15		

What are the Stages of Sleep?

Sleep architecture follows a pattern of alternating rapid eye movement (REM) and non-rapid eye movement (NREM) sleep throughout a typical night in a cycle that repeats itself about every 90 minutes.



NREM (75% of night)

As we begin to fall asleep, we enter NREM sleep, which is composed of three stages.

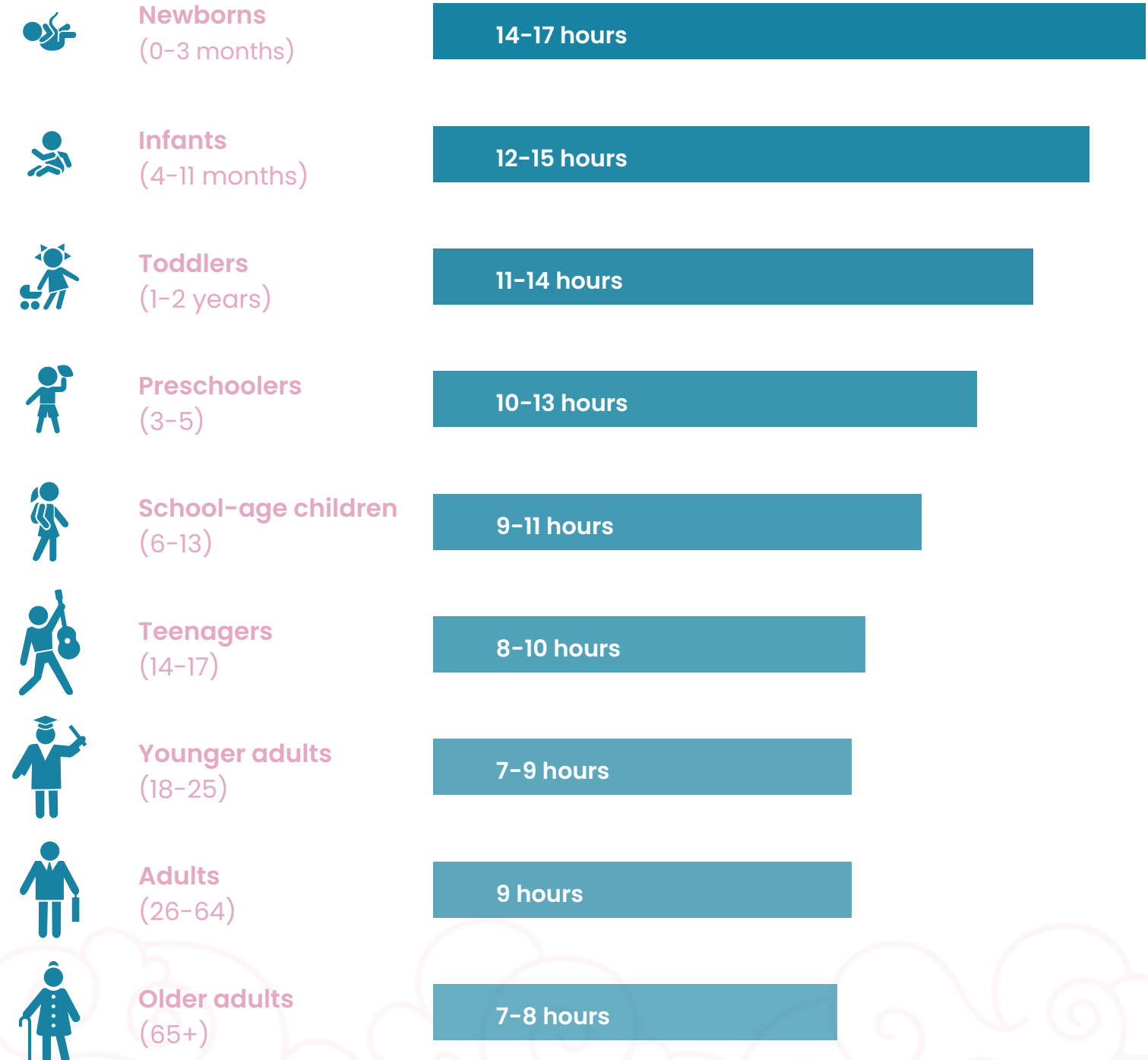
- **N1: Light sleep**
Between being awake and falling asleep
- **N2: Onset of sleep**
Become disengaged from surroundings; body temperature drops
- **N3: Deepest and most restorative sleep**
Breathing becomes slower and muscles relax; energy is restored and hormones are released

REM (25% of night)

First occurs about 90 minutes after falling asleep and recurs about every 90 minutes, getting longer later in the night.

Brain is active and dreams occur; eyes dart back and forth; muscles are turned off

How Much Sleep Do You Need?



Source: SleepFoundation.org

5 Things that Happen When You Sleep

1. Brain refreshes

Your brain actually runs on electricity, and that same electricity creates chemical waste products—metabolites—that get flushed out during sleep. Getting enough sleep and allowing that process to complete positively impacts your ability to concentrate and organize your thoughts.

2. Organs chill out

During the night, kidneys slow down urine production, which is why you need to pee less when you sleep. Heart rate slows. Digestion tapers off in the intestines, and the liver takes a break from detoxification and tries to build and repair tissues. In general, your body goes into repair and prepare mode, getting all systems ready for the new day.

3. Hunger hormones decrease

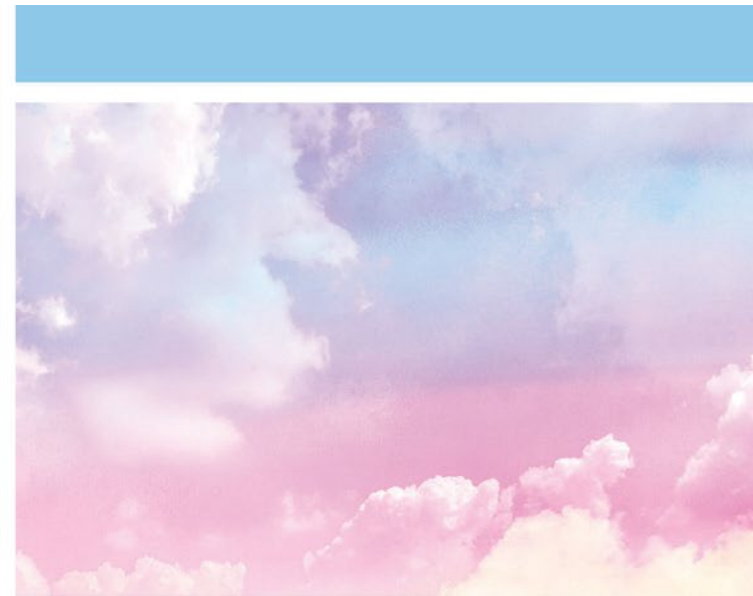
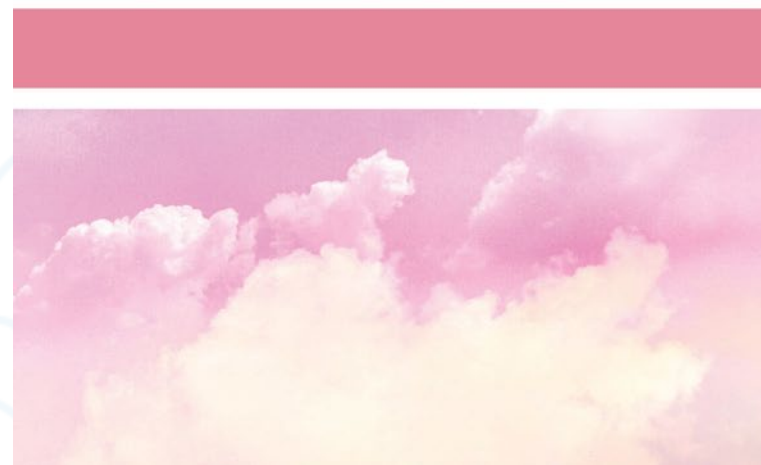
Sleep regulates your levels of ghrelin, the hunger-signaling **hormone**. It also increases the production of leptin, the hormone that signals fullness. If you are sleep-deprived, your brain gets the signal to keep on eating, plus fewer signals to stop eating when you're full. Adequate sleep means those two key hormones, essential for a strong metabolism, do their job of curbing hunger efficiently.

4. Growth hormones circulate

During NREM sleep, the human body makes different growth hormones: the kind that fuel growth in children but also hormones that maintain our tissues and organs as adults. Children whose sleep is impaired by sleep apnea, for example, often experience growth delays. Growth hormones are also responsible for any kind of physical recovery, such as rebuilding muscle mass and healing wounds.

5. Immune system strengthens

Getting enough sleep increases your immune system's chances of warding off attacks. Sleep enhances **immunity**, protecting your body from ailments such as colds, flu and other illnesses.



Beauty Benefits of Sleep

Is “beauty sleep” a real thing? Here’s how and why you can actually *look younger* by consistently getting seven to nine hours of shut-eye:

Replenished skin

Skin produces new **collagen** while you sleep, which is key in helping to prevent **fine lines** and sagging skin. Getting seven to nine hours per night also means **skincare products** like **night creams** and **serums** work more effectively, too!

Brighter eyes

When you skip out on Zzzs, blood flow decreases, paling skin and causing blood to pool beneath the eyes. (Hello, dark circles and puffiness!) By staying **properly hydrated** and getting **restful sleep** each night, you can help eliminate puffiness and brighten your eyes for a youthful glow. *Tip: Prop your head up with an extra pillow to further reduce puffiness.*

Stronger, longer hair

With increased blood flow, your hair follicles are able to receive more vitamins and minerals as you sleep, supplying your hair with the proper amount of nutrients to grow healthy and strong, preventing potential damage and breakage. Plus, getting adequate sleep helps regulate and minimize levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which is linked to hair loss.

The Scientific Link Between Sleep & Weight

Pulling an occasional **all-nighter** or regularly skimping on your Zzzs may seem harmless. But cheating yourself out of few hours of sleep can have a big impact on your health, resulting in an expanding waistline.

What exactly happens in your body when you fall behind on sleep? In **“Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams,”** Matthew Walker, PhD, discusses two hormones that affect body weight when we don't get enough **sleep**: leptin, which signals to the body that it's full, and ghrelin, which triggers a strong hunger sensation. High levels of leptin decrease your appetite, and high levels of ghrelin increase your appetite. If either or both levels are knocked out of alignment due to lack of sleep, you're likely to eat more and pack on the pounds.

“ People who routinely sleep less than seven hours per night will consume 70,000 extra calories, potentially resulting in a 10- to 15-pound weight gain over the course of a year. ”

Proof that fatigued = famished

Research conducted by Eve Van Cauter, PhD, at the University of Chicago found that study participants who slept only four to five hours per night for five nights were ravenous by day two. In contrast, when the same participants were given the opportunity to sleep eight-and-a-half hours per night for five nights, they were able to control their hunger levels. When restricting their sleep, they saw their leptin levels drop and their ghrelin levels rise, which intensified their hunger and decreased their feelings of fullness.

To further prove that those who sleep less actually eat more, Dr. Van Cauter conducted another study. This time she allowed study participants to sleep eight-and-a-half hours per night for four nights and then restricted their allowance to four-and-a-half hours of sleep per night for four nights. Each day they had unlimited access to food.

When the participants slept only four-and-a-half hours each night, they ate 300 calories more each day compared to when they slept a full night. The results were similar for those who slept five to six hours per night for 10 nights. According to **“Why We Sleep,”** over the course of a year, people who routinely sleep less than seven hours per night will consume 70,000 extra calories, potentially resulting in a 10- to 15-pound weight gain.



Sleep & Exercise

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there's a pretty direct relationship between sleep and physical activity; not just in motivation and ability, but also in safety and effectiveness, too!

Poor sleep can cause:

- Decreased energy levels
- Lack of focus, which can contribute to injury
- Low motivation and skipped workouts
- Reduced intensity, altering the effectiveness of your workout
- Altered states of hunger and erratic/poor eating, including increased cravings for sugar
- Poor post-exercise recovery, particularly replenishment and rebuilding of muscle

A good night's sleep will:

- Allow your body to properly repair itself after exercise
- Help your body build muscle more efficiently
- Promote release of natural growth hormones to help strengthen your muscles and bones
- Provide energy for the next day's workouts
- Improve your mood and attitude
- Support your ability to make smart diet choices that can enhance your workouts
- Reduce stress levels
- Strengthen immunity

How Different Sleep Positions Affect Your Health



Research has shown that sleeping positions may affect whether you wake up feeling refreshed — or doubled over in pain. They're also associated with some health conditions, such as **back pain**, **acid reflux** and **snoring**.

Ideal sleeping positions



Back

This neutral positioning prevents any forced curving, keeping your spine, neck, head and back in their natural alignment. It's also great for those suffering from arthritis and rheumatism as body weight is evenly distributed, keeping pain at bay. Snoozing on your back with your head elevated has benefits for acid reflux, by preventing food and acid from coming back up. Back sleeping is also known to help **prevent wrinkles**.

Drawbacks: Back sleeping can increase snoring and sleep apnea and cause other breathing difficulties.



Left side

A healthy alternative to sleeping on your back (for those who have issues), this is the most popular sleep position. Its many benefits include keeping the tongue and throat in neutral positions, clearing the airways and preventing pesky snoring.

It also aids digestion as the stomach and pancreas, located on the left, are gravitationally favored, allowing a smooth digestive process to run while you sleep. Food waste also moves easily from the large intestine to the colon, thanks to their left-side positioning.

Drawbacks: Despite being largely beneficial, side sleeping can put strain on the neck, with pressure and weight restricting **blood flow**, sometimes leading to discomfort or pain.



Not-so-great sleeping positions

Fetal position

This position entails lying on your side with your legs drawn up to your chest. An easy, comforting favorite, this position can help ease wear and tear on the back, as it involves the body curling inwards, reducing pressure on the back discs.

Drawbacks: Sleeping in a fetal position involves misalignment of the neck and shoulders while sleeping, which causes strain on the neck, back and **joints**. Your body also becomes more susceptible to wrinkling and sagging.



Right side

This position is potentially problematic for heartburn sufferers, as validated by **several studies**. Gravity works against the stomach and esophagus when you're lying on your right side.

As with sleeping on the left side, this position also may lead to numbness upon waking. This is the result of excess pressure on the neck or arms, which restricts blood flow for long periods during sleep.



The worst sleeping position

Stomach

If you slumber belly down, you're putting yourself at risk for lower back pain, as the natural curvature of the spine is flattened and the neck is strained.

The only apparent good from this position is its ability to ease snoring.

How to Get Better Sleep

Need help catching more Zzzs? Naturopathic Doctor Laurie Steelsmith highlights her top recommendations.

🧘 Practice mindfulness meditation and yoga

If done on a daily basis, **meditation** and yoga can help you quiet an overactive mind, and also assist with your body's ability to develop brain wave patterns that are calmer and more centered.

You can learn more about mindfulness meditation, and listen to free guided meditations, on **UCLA's Mindful Awareness Research Center site**. To bring yoga right into your own home, consider buying yoga DVDs or trying online classes. Try a p.m. class right before bedtime to help you unwind after a long day.

🛁 Take an aromatherapy bath

Before bedtime, try a **mineral bath** designed for aromatherapy and meditation. These products may blend botanicals, desert salts and essential oils to soften your skin and help calm your mood.

💡 Turn down the lights

Your pineal gland releases melatonin when it's dark, thereby helping to regulate your sleep-wake cycles. The pineal gland doesn't function optimally when lights are kept on late at night, so try to turn down the lights at 8 p.m. (including light from screens!); this allows you to adjust your sleep-wake rhythm so that you can be in bed by 10 p.m.

🍷 Avoid alcohol

Researchers at the University of Missouri School of Medicine have shown that drinking alcohol regularly can disrupt quality of sleep. Although alcohol may assist some people in falling asleep, it may often cause sleep disruptions and difficulty getting back to sleep.

🍴 Eat a healthy dinner

If a person goes for long periods of time without eating, the body releases a stress hormone called cortisol. This mechanism can go into overdrive when you skip dinner, causing wakefulness in the middle of the night when cortisol levels peak. By simply eating a healthy dinner, you can help ensure that your brain is getting the fuel it needs to function all night with normal cortisol release.



How to Keep a Sleep Log

If you're still having trouble, consider keeping a sleep log, which can give you a clear idea of what affects your quality of sleep and how to improve upon it.

For 2-5 weeks, keep track of the following:

Time/Amount of sleep

- When you fall asleep and when you wake up
- Number of times you wake up during the night (estimates are fine)
- Any naps during the day

Food/Drink

- What and when you ate/drank during the day

Exercise

- How much and when you've exercised during the day

Mental state

- How you feel throughout the day, from when you awake to when you go to bed (groggy, alert, rested, etc.)
- What emotions you feel during the day and when you feel that way (happy, sad, anxious, etc.)
- What medications/remedies you've used throughout the day (pain killers, essential oils, etc.)

Events

- Any significant events that have happened during the day and what time
- What activities you've engaged in within the hour before you go to bed

Why People Snore & How to Stop

What causes snoring?

Snoring, or noisy breathing, occurs when a person has difficulty moving air through his or her nose and throat during sleep. This causes the surrounding tissues to vibrate, resulting in the all-too-familiar “snore” sound that may aggravate anyone within hearing distance.

Common causes of snoring include:

- **Age**
Snoring is more prevalent in middle and old age as the throat narrows and loses muscle tone.
- **Sex**
Men are more prone to snoring because they typically have narrower air passages than women.
- **Physical structure**
Attributes such as a cleft palate, enlarged adenoids, a narrow throat and excess throat and nasal tissue can increase the likelihood of snoring.
- **Excess body weight**
Carrying extra weight — especially around the neck and/or throat — can cause snoring.
- **Nasal/sinus problems**
Snoring may also result from a stuffed nose or blocked airways.
- **Sleeping position**
Lying on your back can cause flesh in your throat to relax and impede your airway, which can trigger snoring.
- **Alcohol, nicotine and certain medications**
Booze, cigarettes and medicines, such as tranquilizers, can relax the muscles and increase the odds of snoring.

Sometimes snoring has a more serious cause, such as sleep apnea, a disorder in which breathing is repeatedly interrupted during sleep. Contact your physician if you experience severe symptoms.

Snoring Remedies

Although there is no universal cure for snoring, the following may provide some relief:

- **Exercise regularly**
Physical activity can **tone muscles** throughout the body, including those in the throat, which can help reduce snoring.
- **Lose weight**
Dropping even a few pounds can reduce fatty neck and throat tissue, which, in turn can decrease or stop snoring.
- **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes and certain medications**
Alcohol and drugs, such as sedatives, can relax the throat muscles and impede breathing. Cigarettes can irritate nose and throat membranes, which can block airways and trigger snoring.
- **Avoid certain foods before bed**
Consuming dairy or large meals near bedtime may worsen snoring.
- **Use a humidifier**
Moist air can reduce swelling of nasal tissues and lessen snoring.
- **Adjust sleeping position**
Sleeping on your side and/or elevating your head a few inches can ease breathing and reduce snoring.
- **Use snore spray**
Products, such as **Essential Health Helps Stop Snoring® Throat Spray** can provide effective relief.
- **Use an anti-snoring device**
These can open your nasal passages to improve air flow. Try **Scandinavian Formulas Nozovent® Anti-Snoring Device**, which has been clinically proven to reduce snoring.
- **Use anti-snoring strips**
Drug-free strips, like **Breathe Right® Nasal Strips**, can “open nasal passages for up to 31% more airflow.” Use them nightly to reduce congestion and snoring!



“I’ve tried many different anti snore remedies and this one actually works!”
- Stardust



“My husband has noticed an improvement with my snoring problem, so I definitely will give these a thumbs-up.”
- hohoofws



“I can close my mouth and breathe freely through my nose - I love it!”
- geoff6822

Tips for Sleeping Better with a Partner

You might love your partner—but their sleeping habits? That’s a whole other issue. Here are a few tips for snoozing soundly with a partner who is keeping you up at night.

Communicate and compromise

People often have different sleep preferences, so compromise can help couples meet in the middle. “Some people are light sleepers who can barely sleep if they hear a slight noise, and others could sleep through the apocalypse,” says David Bennett, relationship counselor at **Double Trust Dating**.

Honest and empathic communication is important. And, remember to be kind when you communicate. “Some partners may be sensitive to any criticism related to sleeping in the same bed. As a light sleeper, I have had to deal with partners who couldn’t understand why I was reluctant to sleep in the same bed some nights, especially when I had a big day the next day and needed a full night’s sleep,” he says.

Eat a healthy dinner together

Eating a large meal right before bed may make it harder for you and your partner to fall asleep at night, especially if the meal consists of greasy or salty foods.

Try not to overeat and stick to healthful foods. “Diets rich in whole plant foods like green vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts and seeds are more likely to provide adequate amounts of calcium, magnesium and potassium, which can elicit a calming effect in comparison to high sodium diets,” says **Kelly Jones, MS, RD, CSSD, LDN**.

Unplug

Turn off phones and televisions before bed. “New research shows that screen time before bed can negatively impact sleep. If couples already are having sleep issues, removing technology from the bedroom and focusing on winding down together will be helpful,” says Bennett.

Try a sound machine

The only exception to keeping technology in the bedroom? Sound machines. The soothing sounds of the ocean, a fan or any other white noise can help you fall asleep faster and may prevent nighttime wakings. If your partner snores at night, a sound machine might be just the thing!



Take supplements if you need them

“Sleep is important to me, so I make sure that I cultivate healthy behaviors related to it, and I communicate to my partner that this is important as well,” says Bennett. “I take **melatonin** and **magnesium** before bed, and I have drastically reduced the time it takes me to fall asleep,” he explains.

Pick your temperature

Experts recommend keeping your room on the cooler side, around 65-70 degrees F. If you’re often cold and your partner is often warm, cover yourself with an individual-sized blanket instead of a larger comforter. For more serious issues, look into temperature-controlled mattresses. Each person can set their side of the mattress to a temperature he or she prefers.

Consider sleeping separately at times

This might seem extreme for some couples, but could be a necessary step. After all, partners who sleep together wake each other six times a night on average.

“[Waking up often] can lead to sleep deprivation, which causes a whole host of mental and physical health issues which do impact relationship quality,” says Bennett. “To sleep separately might be exactly what a relationship needs,” he says.

Should You Let Your Pet Sleep in Your Bed?

Pets can help people sleep better because the contact makes them feel safe and secure. Body-to-body contact — human and otherwise — raises levels of oxytocin, also known as the “love hormone.” A growing body of evidence suggests that this feeling of relaxation and attachment can boost the immune system, lower stress and blood pressure and even increase longevity.

If you sleep better without your pet in your bed, you can still let your pet sleep in the same room. A new study from the Mayo clinic found “people with dogs in their rooms (but not on their beds) maintained 83 percent sleep efficiency.” Sleep efficiency is a ratio of time spent asleep to total time in bed, with 80 percent generally considered satisfactory.

Foods to Avoid at Night

Every night, you take a warm bath, cut off screen time and quietly read a book before going to bed. But you're still up tossing and turning all night long. Does this sound familiar? If so, it's possible that your diet may be at fault. Here are some foods you may want to cut from the evening menu for better slumber.

🏠 High-fat foods

It takes fatty foods a **long time to digest**, which can lead to heartburn, indigestion and an upset stomach. You might have to use the bathroom in middle of the night, or toss and turn due to discomfort.

🥓 Cured meat snacks

Cured meats, like pepperoni and bacon, have a high tyramine content. **Tyramine** is an amino acid that increases the amount of norepinephrine secreted by your brain. Norepinephrine is a stimulant, so you don't want it to increase before you hit the hay.

☕ Anything with coffee or caffeine

You know you shouldn't have coffee before bed, right? Don't indulge in that bowl of coffee ice cream (yes, that counts!), and stop drinking sodas long before bedtime. Certain teas contain caffeine, as well.

Tip: Consider swapping your regular coffee for **matcha green tea**. Its caffeine effect is steadier than coffee or other forms of caffeine so you'll feel energetic and rejuvenated throughout the afternoon and evening with no crash later.

🥕 Raw veggies

Your digestive system works overtime to break down the fibers of uncooked vegetables. If you eat them before bedtime, your stomach will be digesting them as you try to fall asleep, possibly causing discomfort and gas.

🍫 Chocolate treats

Chocolate contains caffeine, which explains why a bowl of ice cream might keep you up at night. Avoid milk chocolate and other varieties with added sugars that can boost energy.

🌶️ Spicy foods

Spicy foods are definitely not ideal before bedtime as they can lead to heartburn. They may also speed up metabolism and raise your core body temperature (which actually should decrease for a good night's sleep).

🍎 Dried fruits

Due to its high fiber content, dried fruit can cause gas and stomach aches, so you should only snack on it when you're up and moving around.

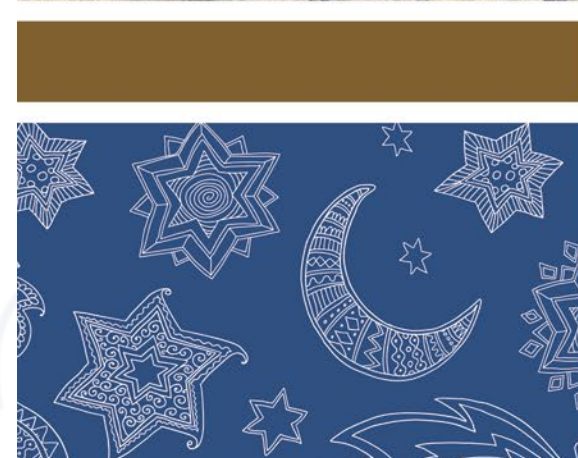
Tip: Packages of dried fruit may contain added sugar. Be sure to check ingredient lists for sweeteners before purchasing.

🍪 Sweet cereals

The high sugar and carb content can wreak havoc on your system by spiking your blood sugar, which then crashes while you try to sleep. You won't feel at all rested the next morning.

💧 Water-heavy fruits and vegetables

Certain fruits like cucumbers and watermelon may cause you to visit the bathroom repeatedly during the night due to their high water content.



★ ★ ★
Enjoy these foods during the day - not at night!

Recipes to Help You Sleep



Bonus:

Assembling your own loose tea blend not only saves you money, it's also better for the environment. Invest in a reusable stainless steel tea ball and say goodbye to disposable tea bags forever.

DIY Herbal Tea for Sleepy Time

Makes: 3-1/2 cups loose tea

Struggling to get good shut-eye? If you've tried all the **tricks for better sleep** but still find yourself tossing and turning, it may be time to put the kettle on. Steep this homemade tea blend – comprised of classic relaxing herbs – and snuggle up with a mug. Before you know it, you'll be off to dreamland, getting the peaceful rest you need.†

Ingredients

- 1 cup **chamomile flowers**
- 1 cup **rooibos**
- 1 cup **spearmint leaves**
- 1 cup loose **valerian root**

Optional: ½ cup other herbs or dried flowers, such as **lemongrass**, lavender buds, **rosehips** and/or **ginger root**

Add to cart

Directions

Combine all ingredients in large bowl; stir well. Transfer to a glass jar; store in pantry for up to 6 months.

To use:

French press method

Add 2 Tbsp. loose tea to French press; pour 2 cups hot (just under boiling point) water over leaves. Top with lid and steep 5 minutes. After 5 minutes, press down lid. Serve.

Tea strainer method

Add 2 Tbsp. loose tea to strainer or tea ball; place in mug. Pour 2 cups hot water into mug; let steep 5 minutes.

Macadamia & Ashwagandha Moon Milk

Serves 1

Ever tried moon milk? Stemming from an old Ayurvedic practice, drinking warm, herb-infused moon milk before bed is said to help you unwind and slip slowly and peacefully into sleep. Though many different versions exist, this one boasts ashwagandha, an adaptogenic herb also known as Indian ginseng that may promote a good mood and sense of calm.†

Ingredients

- ¾ cup **unsweetened vanilla macadamia nut milk**
- 1 Tbsp. **cranberry juice** or tart cherry juice
- 2 tsp. **coconut butter**
- ¼ tsp. **ashwagandha**

Directions

Heat all ingredients in small saucepan over medium heat until near-simmer. Transfer to mug and whip until frothy.

Add to cart



Is Banana Peel Tea the Answer to Better Sleep?

There aren't any controlled human trials demonstrating proven health benefits of banana peel tea, but banana peels have a long history of use in folk and traditional medicine, says registered dietitian nutritionist Suzanne Dixon.

"One of the most common conditions for which people recommend banana peel tea is insomnia," she said. Banana peels contain precursor compounds, **melatonin and serotonin**, neurotransmitters that help regulate sleep onset and duration.†

How to Make Banana Peel Tea

Save several cups worth of banana peels in the freezer. When ready to make tea, thaw the peels at room temperature for about 45 minutes; they will turn black.

Bake them at 150 degrees F for about an hour until completely dried. Pulverize peels with a blender or food processor; they will look like regular tea.

Place a heaping teaspoon in a tea ball and steep in hot water for 2-4 minutes.

The Best Essential Oils for Better Sleep



If you're doing everything to promote a good night's rest and still aren't sleeping well, aromatherapy may be your ticket to dreamland.

Caution: Essential oils contain naturally occurring compounds that can trigger allergic reactions or skin irritations. If using topically, always **dilute essential oils** in a **carrier oil** and test one at a time for reactions. If a reaction occurs, stop using the oils immediately. If you are pregnant or nursing, consult a doctor before using essential oils. Note: Not all essential oils are safe for pets. Verify the safety of oils before using near animals.

Which essential oils support sleep?

There are a **limited number of scientific studies** on a few oils and **oil blends**, but the data is not robust enough to prove most oils' effectiveness definitively. However, the scientific community is continuing to research essential oils' effects on sleep.

These oils, used individually or blended together, have developed a reputation for helping people get better quality sleep:†

- **Lavender**
- **Lemon balm**
- **Sandalwood**
- **Roman chamomile**
- **Cedarwood**
- **Clary sage**
- **Sweet orange**
- **Frankincense**
- **Neroli**
- **Ylang ylang**
- **Bergamot**

You can also try a **sleep blend** containing several sleep-enhancing oils.

Depending on what's keeping you from getting quality Zzzs, different oils may be called for. For example, if you have breathing issues due to allergies, **one study** found symptoms improved with sandalwood, geranium and ravensara.† Pain-related sleep disturbance may be best addressed with **pain-relieving oils** like lavender, sweet orange or frankincense.†



How to Use Essential Oils



Diffuse

Ultrasonic diffusers can be set to turn on intermittently through the night, keeping your air filled with soporific scent. If you plan to use it all night, pick one without a light or a light that can be shut off.

You can also put essential oils **directly on your pillow**, but note that they may stain your pillowcase. A drop on a tissue or cloth tucked into your pillowcase should get scent to your nose without staining. You can also **mist your pillow** or **spray your room** with an oil blend.

An **aromatherapy pillow** next to your sleeping pillow is another option to release scent all night long. You can refresh its scent with an extra drop of oil each night.

Add to your bath

Simply dilute 3-10 drops in a tablespoon of carrier oil and mix in after your tub has filled. You can also add them into easy **DIY bath salts**, which add the benefits of **magnesium**, a mineral you can absorb through the skin for muscle and nerve support.†

Apply topically

Add a drop of your favorite sleep-inducing oil or blend to a carrier oil and massage into your temples, wrists or neck. One drop per teaspoon of carrier oil will get you a dilution rate of 1%, 2 drops per teaspoon is 2%. It's safest to keep dilution to 2% or lower. You also can try a **pre-diluted roll-on**, which is also great for travel.

Better still, rub some relaxing aromatherapy massage oil on tight muscles and get the sleep-inducing benefits of a **massage**.

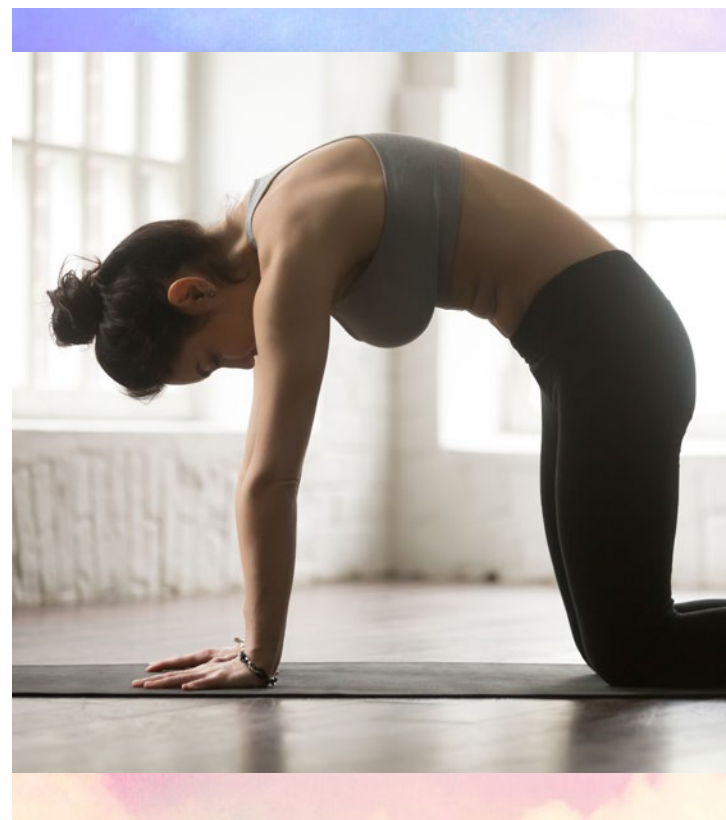
Yoga Poses for Better Sleep



Getting sweaty with a vigorous physical practice at least three hours before bed is one way to go. Like all well-timed exercise, it helps with sleep. But yoga goes the extra mile in calming your nervous system, thanks in part to its **slow and deep breathing** and end relaxation portion.

If shut-eye hour is rounding the corner and you haven't packed in strong movement, yoga can still usher you into a peaceful night's Zzzs. You'll be looking for — no surprise — its **gentle and restorative poses**.

The sequence below takes as little as five minutes or can last much longer if you choose. You can do it right before you slide under the covers or earlier in the night if you maintain a quiet state afterward.

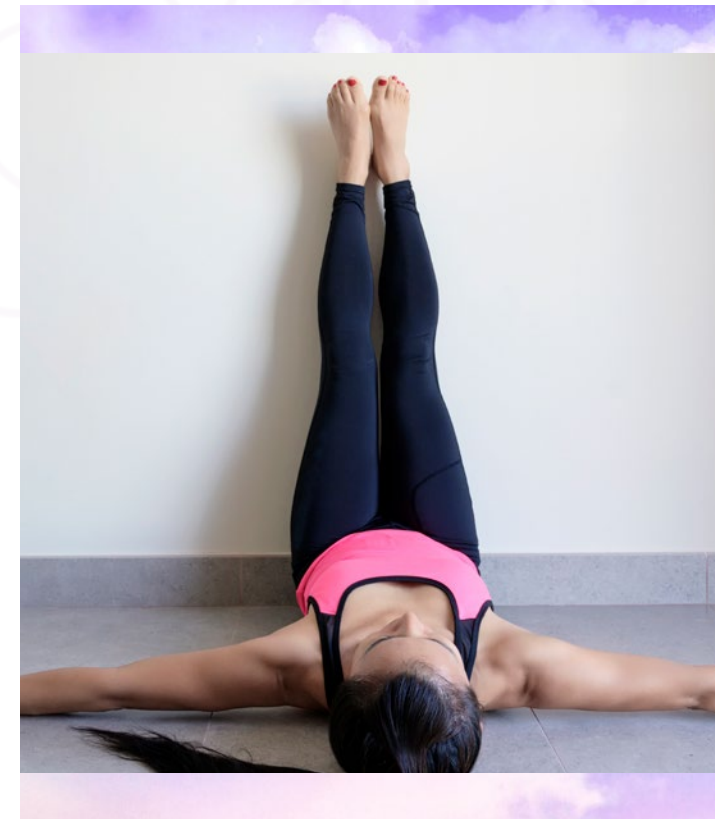


Release lingering energy with cat-cow

It's hard to suddenly be still if you're buzzing with even a little energy. This gets it out.

- Come to your hands and knees, with your wrists under your shoulders and your knees under your hips. As you inhale drop your belly down as you lift your hips and head toward the ceiling, drawing your shoulders away from your ears.
- As you exhale, round your back like a cat, pulling your chin to your chest and dropping your tailbone.
- Take as many rounds as you need, perhaps incorporating a sway in your hips.

Tip: If you have osteoporosis or osteopenia, skip cat and move into a flat back instead. If you have wrist issues, come to your forearms, with your elbows under your shoulders, and practice the moves that way.

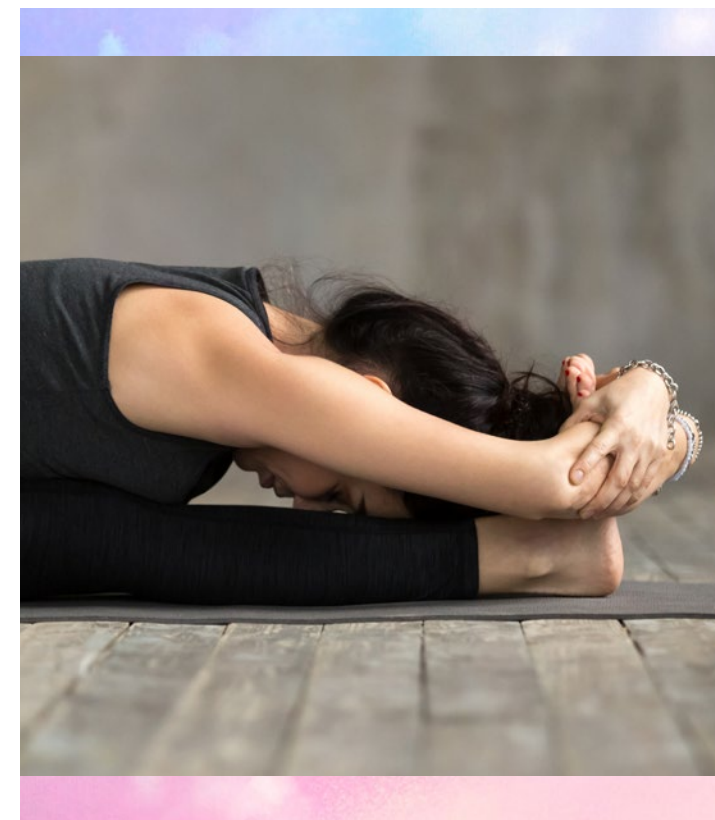


Breathe deeply with legs up the wall

Legs up the wall is a classic restorative pose that creates space in your upper body to allow for deep breaths, activating your parasympathetic nervous system, which slows your heart rate.

- Sit with a hip about a foot from a wall. Pivot to face the wall, and lie back.
- Lift your legs, so your heels rest on the wall.
- Place one hand on your belly, the other near your heart.
- Begin each inhale with a lift in your belly and continue to draw breath in until it expands your ribcage then chest. Do this to the count of five. Pause for a count. Exhale to the count of six, feeling your front torso release down.
- Take at least 10 rounds of breath.

Tip: The farther you move your buttocks from the wall, the gentler the pose is on your hamstrings. If your legs begin to splay, **secure them gently with a strap**. Alternatively you can scoot your buttocks out farther and rest the soles of your feet on the wall, or you can place your calves on a chair or couch.



Get drowsy with supported forward bend

Forward bends are especially calming, turning your attention and senses inward.

- Sit and place rolled blankets or towels under your knees so that the backs of your thighs relax as opposed to stretching.
- Place a pillow or two over your front thighs.
- Push your fingers or palms into the ground next to your hips to sit up straight and encourage the natural curve of your spine.
- Hinge forward from your hips without rounding your lower back. Rest your belly and chest on the pillows, and drop your forehead.
- Stay for as long as you'd like. If it's hard to breathe with your forehead down, turn your head to one side, later turning it to the other side.

Tip: Even if you're very flexible and can fold your whole torso over your legs, do the supported version so you can hold the pose longer.

What is Melatonin?

Melatonin, a hormone in your body made by the pineal gland, plays a starring role in our natural sleep cycle. The production and release of melatonin in the brain is linked to time of day. Melatonin production ramps up when it's dark and tapers off when it's light. Melatonin levels in the blood stay elevated for about 12 hours before the light of a new day when levels of melatonin are barely detectable. Levels of melatonin also decline with age.

👍 What are some benefits?

Studies have found melatonin provides effective sleep support and jet lag relief. A powerful antioxidant, it may deliver a variety of other health-supporting benefits.†

🍷 How much should I take?

The safest dose is the lowest effective dose that helps you **fall asleep** without side effects. Typically, **a dose of melatonin** between 0.2 and 5 mg is considered a safe starting dose.†

🌙 Can you take too much?

The effective dosage for **melatonin supplements** can vary from person to person. If you take too much, you may feel extremely sleepy during unintended times or experience intense dreams or nightmares.



🕒 How long does it take to kick in?

If you have **trouble falling asleep**, try taking melatonin 30 minutes before bedtime. But people who suffer from delayed sleep phase syndrome—also known as night owls—may want to take it several hours before they intend to fall asleep.

➔ Can it relieve jet lag?

Several studies have suggested that melatonin is helpful for **jet lag** if taken a few days before and after travel. The time at which you take melatonin is connected to which direction you are flying. According to the Mayo Clinic, “If you’re trying to reset your body clock to a later time, such as after flying east, you should take melatonin at local bedtime nightly until you have become adapted to local time. If you’re trying to reset your body clock to an earlier time, such as after flying west, melatonin should be taken in the morning.”†

👶 Can it be taken during pregnancy?

Again, most research points to melatonin’s safety record, but there are some holes in the data, specifically regarding pregnancy. One study done on animals did find that additional melatonin during pregnancy resulted in lower maternal and baby birth weight.†

👦 Is it safe for kids?

Because too little is known about whether melatonin can interfere with hormonal development during adolescence, it’s best to err on the side of caution. The potential risks may mean it’s not the best supplement for most children.†



Spotlight: Vitacost Melatonin

“Happy I found this product. [It’s] one of the items I always re-order when I get close to running out.”

– JoeZ

Possible Side Effects of Melatonin



Short-term feelings of depression

While multiple, reputable sources, including the FDA, agree that melatonin is generally safe for temporary use, one of its lesser-known side effects is short-term feelings of depression. Melatonin diminishes energy and may lead to lethargy, which are common symptoms of depression.

Try this instead: Bed down with a **lavender** pillow — or take a whiff of the fragrant herb before you hit the sheets.

Mood changes

Melatonin may also lead to mood changes that could affect your *waking* hours. According to Mental Health America, “mood changes have been reported, both highs and lows, and even psychotic symptoms such as paranoia and hallucinations.” Additionally, the **National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH)** says that according to one study, “researchers noted that melatonin supplements may worsen mood in people with dementia.”†

Try this instead: A noise machine. Sounds from nature — whether it’s lulling waves or a rainforest — can provoke a relaxation response in the brain, thereby urging you closer and closer to the serene state that’s needed for sleep.

Gastric distress

Insomnia and now...intestinal aches? Possibly. Mental Health America reports that the most common side effect of melatonin is **gastric distress**. The most frequent complaints are nausea, vomiting and/or stomach cramps.†

Try this instead: A mug of warm milk with **honey**. Milk contains the sleep-inducing amino acid tryptophan, while honey helps the amino acid work faster.

Daytime sleepiness

While the intended function of melatonin is, of course, increased sleepiness, experiencing drowsiness during the day can wreak havoc on your mood, plans and ability to function optimally. Even if you take melatonin at night — when it’s typically recommended — you may have what’s called “reduced melatonin clearance rates,” or the pace at which melatonin is removed from the body.

Try this instead: **Exercise**. Gentle exercises that naturally promote relaxation — such as **yoga**, stretching and tai chi — can reduce anxiety, quiet the chatter in your mind and help prepare you for a full night of Zzzs.

Decreased body temperature

The **National Institutes of Health** indicates that melatonin may also lower your body’s core temperature. While this may be desired by some — especially those who feel too hot to sleep — it may be a problem for those who have trouble staying warm.†

Try this instead: Hide your electronics. You might mute your phone or iPad, but the glowing screen that appears when a text, email or update arrives is bound to make a night of tossing and turning worse. Keep your devices in another room, call upon an old-school alarm clock to rise the next day, or use the Bedtime app on your iPhone, which will keep interruptions away.

Reproductive system

The link between melatonin and reproductive systems is not entirely understood — yet — but because it does impact this area of your body, breastfeeding moms (and those who wish to get pregnant) are advised to eschew melatonin supplements altogether.†

Try this instead: Brew a mug of **valerian tea**. In a study out of Norway, it was found that the herbal tea helped roughly one in 13 insomniacs fall — and stay — asleep. **Chamomile**, lemon balm, magnolia and that aforementioned **lavender** (albeit in a different form) can also do the trick.†

Bottom line

While rare, melatonin may result in one or a number of side effects, and should only be used for short-term relief and under your doctor’s supervision. Should you and your physician decide that it’s a wise option, consider going with **Vitacost’s Melatonin Plus Theanine**. The sleep and stress-support formula combines melatonin with L-theanine, giving you natural aid for relaxation and sounder, deeper sleep.† A better night’s rest is in your future — and now you have the power to harness it.

More Supplements to Help You Unwind†



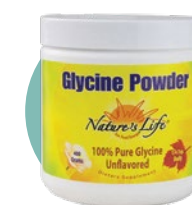
Vitacost Chelated Magnesium

“Best magnesium out there! Great value for money. I’ll keep buying it.”
– Mike



NOW L-Tryptophan

“Have used product for few weeks & it has consistently helped.”
– Gail



Nature’s Life Glycine Powder

“It is convenient to mix a small amount into a beverage. It is naturally sweet but otherwise has no flavor that would interfere with anything.”
– 2toTango



Nature’s Answer Passion Flower

“Helps provide relaxation necessary for easily drifting off to sleep.”
– lockwood5



Enzymatic Therapy L-Theanine

“We have told many family members and friends about this product and they have been taking it for years as well.”
– Janifer

Is Your Child Getting Enough Sleep?

In 2016, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine released their recommended guidelines for children's sleep based on age.

Age	Hours
Birth - 3 mo	14-17 (including naps)
4 mo - 1 yr	12-15 (including naps)
1-2 yrs	11-14 (including naps)
3-5 yrs	10-13 (including naps)
6-13 yrs	9-12
Teens	8-10

Young kids

For most younger children, it's easy to make sure they're getting enough sleep, and it's even easier to tell when they haven't had enough. Every parent is familiar with the "overtired child" syndrome: erratic emotions, hyperactivity and trouble concentrating. That's usually when you announce, "someone needs a nap," and pull the parent card, sending them off for a little afternoon snooze.

Even though we may joke about it, kids not getting enough sleep can mean more than just irritating behavior. The side effects of prolonged **sleep deprivation** can exacerbate serious health risks, including obesity, diabetes and hypertension — yes, even in children.

Teens

When it comes to teens, sleep becomes much more complicated. Teenagers' minds and bodies are growing and developing at an astronomical rate — similar to how rapidly toddlers grow. So while they may not need quite as much sleep as a toddler, their sleep cycles are just as important.

Teenagers have different and unique circadian rhythms, meaning their natural state of waking and sleeping is not the same as a young child's. Their circadian rhythm is set to a later time than younger children's, meaning it's harder for them to **unwind and fall asleep** before 11 at night, and their brains stay in "sleep mode" until 8 in the morning. And this isn't something that can be changed by making them get up earlier and go to bed earlier.



How to Make Sure Kids Get Enough Sleep

All in all, the recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Sleep Medicine are completely in line with the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control.

Despite all of those expert recommendations, little, if any, of our children's worlds are set up to respect and value the essential sleep needs of childhood that are required to live a healthy and happy life.

This means we, as parents, need to take things a bit slower and help our kids, regardless of age, learn to listen to their bodies and protect their health.

Have a routine

Young kids can benefit immensely from a nightly routine of quiet time with a book or story time. Older kids and teens should have their own version of a routine that extends beyond basic hygiene. Try incorporating **meditation for kids**, pre-bed stretching or yoga, or a spiritual practice such as prayer.

Limit electronics

Electronic devices, like most modern light sources, emit blue light. Blue light is only naturally occurring during the day and is the way our bodies, historically, have known when to wake and when to sleep. The constant bombardment of blue light from artificial sources disrupts our natural circadian rhythms.

Create a calming atmosphere

Keep the room cool and turn out all the lights (if little ones insist on a night light, be sure to find a red light to avoid disrupting their circadian rhythm). Consider using an **essential oil diffuser** to enhance the tranquility of the room with essential oils such as **lavender**, **geranium** or a **calming blend**.

Acknowledgements



The content within this book was adapted from articles and recipes provided by:

Isadora Baum

Abigail Blank

Tess DiNapoli

John Egan

Jordana Gagnon

Maura “Mo” Knowles

Mitra Malek

Elizabeth Marglin

Heather McClees

Melissa Neiman

Elizabeth Plumtre

Susannah Shmurak

Dr. Laurie Steelsmith, ND, LAc

Melissa Transou

Crystal Zuzek

About Vitacost.com



With over 25 years in the natural health industry, Vitacost.com has become one of the largest online retailers of wellness essentials. We offer unbeatable prices, quick and easy shopping and a nearly endless selection of dietary supplements, hard-to-find foods, organic beauty and personal care products, sports nutrition, household cleaners and so much more. Additionally, we strive to educate and inspire people to be their most healthy by creating and curating thousands of helpful tips, expert articles, recipes and even e-books.