

Tips for Sound Sleep

Life sometimes presents challenges. When we are stressed, our sleep may be compromised. Good sleep is important to maintain good health. It is when our bodies rejuvenate and heal. Below are the tools that have worked for me during times of stress to ensure a goodnight's sleep. These tips are not meant to be a Rx for sleep but rather optional suggestions that might help you as much as they have helped me.

1. Hydrate well throughout the day. Start your day with a glass of water upon rising and enjoy another a few hours before retiring.
2. Eat a clean simple diet of lots of whole fresh foods. Eliminate ALL caffeine, alcohol, chocolate and refined sugar. Reduce salt. The simpler we eat, the less our body has to digest. The less it has to work, the easier it is to rest.
3. Eliminate oil and reduce fat especially at dinner. While fats are important, the body works to break them down. Save them for lunch instead of your last meal.
4. Help the body to enhance its melatonin naturally: augment your diet with foods such as red cherries, asparagus, sweet corn, ginger, bananas, tomatoes, oats, and others; turn off or dim your lights earlier in the evening, use an eye pillow.
5. Clear your mind. Begin and/or end your day with a quiet or guided meditation. Choose from guided meditations on YouTube or you might visit my website for one that resonates with you.
6. Exercise during the day. Do something you enjoy—walk, jog, run, ski, swim, dance, practice yoga, pilates or weight lift, etc.
7. Get outdoors—bask in the elements of nature whether it's walking barefoot in the grass or in the sand, basking in the sunshine, being caressed by a gentle breeze, breathing in fresh brisk air, or star gazing in the evening.
8. Practice restorative yoga in the afternoon. Pull out your props and your eye pillow. An especially helpful position is legs up the wall (Viparita Karani). Restorative yoga helps the body return to the parasympathetic nervous system, rest and digest mode in lieu of the sympathetic nervous system, flight or flight mode.
9. You might enjoy a massage or energy balancing (Reiki, Healing Touch, etc) in the afternoon or the evening.
10. Eat earlier. Enjoy your last meal three to four hours before your bed time to give your food time to digest so the body does not awaken in the night.
11. After your last meal, you might experiment with some relaxing herbal teas such as chamomile, lavender or rooibos, Traditional Medicinals offers organic fair trade teas.
12. After dinner, take a relaxing hot bath. You might add essential oils to the bath water or even add lavender to your hair before bed.
13. You might engage in deep breathing before bedtime. I like the Wim Hof Method.
14. Limit stimulus (drama or information) at least an hour before bed.
 - eliminate anything distressing from the news, media, etc.
 - detach from work
 - turn off all devices
 - refrain from conversation
 - if watching videos, enjoy nature before retiring like waterfalls
15. Before bed, engage in five minutes of deep breathing. You can do different types of breath work (pranayama), such as inhaling through the nose and exhaling out the mouth or holding one nostril while inhaling with the opposite nostril and then releasing it to exhale on that side.
16. Try a diffuser in your bedroom with your favorite relaxing essential oil(s).
17. After you crawl in bed, you might gently stretch your whole body, extending up through your arms and fingers, stretching all the way down through the body in to the legs, feet and toes.
18. Read a pleasurable book—ideally fiction.
19. Clear your mind with a self-guided visualization such as a waterfall cleansing your thoughts. You might imagine as the thoughts dissipate in to a pool below, they are transformed in to flowers growing up at the edge of the pool.
20. Drift off to sleep with relaxing music. You might make a long loop of the sounds of nature.

Disclaimer:

These statements have not been evaluated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Information is intended for the purpose of sharing information only and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. Before beginning any regime, consult a licensed medical physician.