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Want a Good Night's Sleep?

Causes and Solutions for Insomnia



Sleep is one of the great mysteries of life. Like gravity or the quantum field, we still don't understand exactly why we sleep- although we are learning more about it every day.

We do know, however, that good sleep is one of the cornerstones of health.

Six to eight hours per night seems to be the optimal amount of sleep for most adults, and too much or too little can have adverse effects on your health.

Sleep deprivation is such a chronic condition these days that you might not even realise you suffer from it. Science has now established that a sleep deficit can have serious, far reaching effects on your health.

For example, interrupted or impaired sleep can:

- Dramatically weaken your immune system
- Accelerate tumour growth- tumours grow two to three times faster in laboratory animals with severe sleep dysfunctions
- Cause a pre-diabetic state, making you feel hungry even if you've already eaten, which can wreak havoc on your weight
- Seriously impair your memory; even a single night of poor sleep- meaning sleeping only 4 to 6 hours- can impact your ability to think clearly the next day
- Impair your performance on physical or mental tasks, and decrease your problem solving ability

When your circadian rhythms are disrupted, your body produces less melatonin (a hormone AND an antioxidant) and has less ability to fight cancer, since melatonin helps suppress free radicals that can lead to cancer. This is why tumours grow faster when you sleep poorly.

You know when you're tired and you feel lousy, you're in pain, or you have a health problem that just won't go away? Imagine bouncing out of bed in the morning, feeling on top of the world and thinking what a great day it is!

To get your free 1 hr Health Assessment (valued at \$120), to find out how good you can really feel, please go to www.cntc.com.au, or call us on **3376 6911**.

"My life is so much better now!"

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Impaired sleep can also increase stress-related disorders, including:

- Heart disease
- Stomach ulcers
- Constipation
- Mood disorders like depression

Sleep deprivation prematurely ages you by interfering with your growth hormone production, normally released by your pituitary gland during deep sleep. Growth hormone helps you look and feel younger.

One study has even shown that people with chronic insomnia have a three times greater risk of dying from **any** cause.

Lost sleep is lost forever, and persistent lack of sleep *has a cumulative effect* when it comes to disrupting your health. Poor sleep can make your life miserable, as you probably know.

Causes

We think of insomnia as a health issue, but it's more accurate to think of it as a **symptom of another problem**. The problem causing the insomnia will vary from one person to another. It could be something as simple as drinking too much caffeine during the day, or a more complex issue like an underlying medical condition, or feeling overloaded with responsibilities.

The most common causes of poor sleep are

- **Stimulants** such as coffee and alcohol
- **Stress**
- **Excess adrenaline levels** (although lack of sleep can cause high adrenaline levels, causing a vicious cycle!)
- **Worry and anxiety**
- **Lack of the nutrients needed** for good sleep (such as Tryptophan)
- **Medications** (both over the counter and prescription)
- **Temperature imbalances** in the body, such as the feet being too cold or the face and head too warm, or an over-active thyroid
- **Poor breathing during sleep**- this is usually caused by congestion in the sinuses. (Sleep apnea, which causes very poor quality sleep, can often be improved significantly by treating the person's sinuses.) Snoring is a common symptom of sinus congestion.

In Chinese medicine, the liver is at its most active between 1 am and 3 am, so if you wake up between these hours it can mean that your liver is not working well. It is likely that your liver is being irritated by either something in your diet, coffee, alcohol, medications, or by other chemicals stored in your body. **Between 1 am and 3 am is also the most important sleep time**, and if you are awake then it can stop your body getting good quality sleep. Being awake then will also disrupt your liver, which will make the whole problem worse. On the other hand, if you wake up between 3am and 5 am, it is likely that there is too much worry going on, especially if your mind is going over things then.

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Solutions

The good news is, there are many natural techniques you can use to restore your “sleep health.”

Whether you have difficulty falling asleep, waking up too often, or feeling inadequately rested when you wake up in the morning- or maybe you simply want to improve the quality of your sleep- you are sure to find some relief from our tips below.

Optimizing Your Sleep Sanctuary

1. **Sleep in complete darkness, or as close to it as possible.** Even the tiniest bit of light in the room can disrupt your internal clock and your pineal gland's production of melatonin and serotonin. Even the tiniest glow from your clock radio could be interfering with your sleep. This will help decrease your risk of cancer. Close your bedroom door, and get rid of night-lights. Refrain from turning on any light at all during the night, even when getting up to go to the bathroom. Cover up your clock radio.

Cover your windows- you may consider getting blackout shades or drapes installed.

All life evolved in response to predictable patterns of light and darkness, called circadian rhythms. Modern day electrical lighting has significantly betrayed your inner clock by disrupting your natural rhythms. Little bits of light pass directly through your optic nerve to your hypothalamus, which controls your biological clock.

Light signals your brain that it's time to wake up and starts preparing your body for ACTION.

2. **Keep the temperature in your bedroom no higher than 22 degrees.** Studies show that the optimal room temperature for sleep is quite cool, between 16 to 20 degrees. Having your room cooler or hotter can lead to restless sleep.

When you sleep, your body's internal temperature drops to its lowest level, generally about four hours after you fall asleep. Scientists believe a cooler bedroom may therefore be most conducive to sleep, since it mimics your body's natural temperature drop.

3. **Avoid using loud alarm clocks.** It is very stressful on your body to be suddenly jolted awake. If you are regularly getting enough sleep, an alarm may even be unnecessary.
4. **Reserve your bed for sleeping.** If you are used to watching TV or doing work in bed, you may find it harder to relax and drift off to sleep, so avoid doing these activities in bed.

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Preparing for Bed

1. **Get to bed as early as possible.** Your body (particularly your adrenal system) does a majority of its recharging between the hours of 11 pm and 1 am. In addition, your gallbladder dumps toxins during this same period. If you are awake, the toxins back up into your liver, which can further disrupt your health.

Prior to the widespread use of electricity, people would go to bed shortly after sundown, as most animals do, and which nature intended for humans as well.
2. **Don't change your bedtime.** You should go to bed and wake up at the same times each day, even on the weekends. This will help your body to get into a sleep rhythm and make it easier to fall asleep and get up in the morning.
3. **Establish a bedtime routine.** This could include meditation, deep breathing, using aromatherapy or essential oils or indulging in a massage from your partner. The key is to find something that makes you feel relaxed, then repeat it each night to help you release the tensions of the day.
4. **Don't drink any fluids within 2 hours of going to bed, and go to the bathroom right before bed.** These will reduce the likelihood of needing to get up and go to the bathroom, or at least minimize the frequency.
5. **Eat a high-protein snack several hours before bed.** This can provide the L-tryptophan needed for your melatonin and serotonin production.
6. **Also eat a small piece of fruit.** This can help the tryptophan cross your blood-brain barrier.
7. **Avoid before-bed snacks, particularly grains and sugars.** These will raise your blood sugar and delay sleep. Later, when your blood sugar drops too low (hypoglycemia), you may wake up and be unable to fall back asleep.
8. **If your feet feel cold, wear socks to bed.** Feet often feel cold before the rest of the body because they have the poorest circulation. A study has shown that wearing socks reduces night wakings.
9. **Wear an eye mask to block out light.** As discussed earlier, it is very important to sleep in as close to complete darkness as possible. It's not always easy to block out every stream of light using curtains, blinds or drapes, so an eye mask can be helpful.
10. **Put your work away at least one hour before bed (preferably two hours or more).** This will give your mind a chance to unwind so you can go to sleep feeling calm, not hyped up or anxious about tomorrow's deadlines.
11. **No TV right before bed.** Even better, get the TV out of the bedroom or even completely out of the house. It's too stimulating to the brain, preventing you from falling asleep quickly. TV disrupts your pineal gland function.

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12. **Listen to relaxation CDs.** Some people find the sound of white noise or nature sounds, such as the ocean or forest, to be soothing for sleep.
13. **Read something spiritual or uplifting.** This may help you relax. Don't read anything stimulating, such as a mystery or suspense novel, which has the opposite effect. In addition, if you are really enjoying a suspenseful book, you might be tempted to go on reading for hours, instead of going to sleep!
14. **Journaling.** If you often lay in bed with your mind racing, it might be helpful keep a journal and write down your thoughts before bed.

Lifestyle Suggestions That Enhance Sleep

- **Avoid caffeine.** As mentioned earlier, the liver is very important in sleep, and caffeine affects the liver. At least one study has shown that, in some people, caffeine is not metabolized efficiently, leaving you feeling its effects long after consumption. So, an afternoon cup of coffee or tea will keep some people from falling asleep at night. Be aware that some medications contain caffeine (for example, diet pills).
- **Avoid alcohol.** Although alcohol will make you drowsy, the effect is short lived and you will often wake up several hours later, unable to fall back asleep. Alcohol will also keep you from entering the deeper stages of sleep, where your body does most of its healing.
- **Reduce or avoid as many drugs as possible.** Many drugs, both prescription and over-the-counter, may adversely affect sleep. In most cases, the condition causing the drugs to be taken in the first place can be addressed by treatments from our therapists.
- **Make certain you are exercising regularly.** Exercising for at least 30 minutes per day can improve your sleep. However, don't exercise too close to bedtime or it may keep you awake. Studies show exercising in the morning is the best if you can manage it.
- **Lose excess weight.** Being overweight can increase your risk of sleep apnea, which can seriously impair your sleep.
- **Avoid foods you may be sensitive to.** This is particularly true for sugar, grains, and pasteurized dairy. Sensitivity reactions can cause excess congestion (including congestion in the sinuses, which can result in sleep apnea), gastrointestinal upset, bloating and gas, and other problems.
- **If you are menopausal or perimenopausal, get checked at our clinic.** The hormonal changes at this time may cause sleep problems if not properly addressed.

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If These Changes Aren't Enough

- **Consider having a regular massage once a week.** The deeply relaxing effect of the massage on the mind and body will often improve your sleep considerably.
- **Have a Health Assessment at our Clinic.** As with all health issues, the big question is always "Why?" Once we know this, we can provide you with the right treatments and supplements for you, to have you sleeping properly again as quickly and effectively as possible.

We have a range of treatments and supplements that calm and relax the mind, settle the nervous system, reduce adrenaline levels, and clear built-up stress. One of the most valuable sleep supplements is melatonin- in scientific studies, it has been shown to increase sleepiness, help you fall asleep more quickly and stay asleep, decrease restlessness, and reverse daytime fatigue. Melatonin is a completely natural substance, made by your body, and has many health benefits in addition to sleep. Because of its powerful effects on the body, it should only be prescribed by a qualified natural therapist.

"First time in two years, not medicating to sleep, and sleeping through the night."

~ Heidi Hood

zzzzzzzz

To enjoy great sleep again, please ring **3376 6911** or visit www.cntc.com.au to receive your free Comprehensive Health Assessment (valued at \$120).

Your Assessment will help uncover

- ✓ *what is happening with your health*
- ✓ *what has caused the problem, and*
- ✓ *what treatments would be most effective for you*

All of this will be fully explained to you, and there is absolutely no obligation attached to your assessment

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