

Wellbeing



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How to get a good night's sleep

Don't lie there tossing and turning. Take our experts' advice and enjoy a peaceful night's slumber...

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Get the temperature right

Most people prefer to sleep in a slightly cool environment. A room temperature of around 16-18°C (60-65°F) is usually sufficient for getting a good night's sleep, according to [The Sleep Council](#). Your body temperature tends to drop to its lowest levels when you're asleep in the early morning. So open the window if necessary, make sure you have adequate bedding and pillows, use the right tog duvet for the time of year and layer with sheets or blankets that can easily be removed if you get too hot. 'It's also a good idea to wear natural fibre pyjamas as they'll wick away any sweat,' says sleep expert Dr Neil Stanley from [Crampex](#).

Listen to your body

Ideally, you should try to go to bed and get up at the same time every day. And yes, that includes weekends. The reason? The body needs routine. Dr Neil Stanley explains: 'Your body starts to prepare for waking one hour before you actually wake up, but it needs to know what time that will be.' However, it's also important that you avoid confusing your body. 'Only go to bed when you're sleepy,' advises Dr Stanley. 'Don't just head for bed because a TV show has finished or because your partner's tired and wants to go to sleep.'

Switch it all off!

Heading for bed in an hour or so? It's time to step away from the screen. 'Smartphones, tablets and laptops now play a significant role in affecting sleep patterns,' says Silentnight sleep expert Dr Nerina Ramlakhan. 'Spending too much time on social media sites in the evening, working in bed on a laptop and checking phone messages during the night can all affect sleep quality.' So create a restful environment by keeping your bedroom free of technology and TVs. Try to get into the habit of winding down before bedtime by reading a book or relaxing in a warm bath instead.



IKEA

Choose your mattress wisely

So your bed's not as comfortable as it could be? Then it's hardly surprising you're having trouble sleeping. Bedding expert Jo Say from [House of Bath](#) offers this advice: 'Ideally, your mattress should support you almost without the need for a pillow. Your head and neck should rest in-line with your spine, with your head resting no more than 5cm above the mattress. If you can feel your head dropping significantly with no pillow, your mattress may be too firm for you.' Remember, mattress requirements vary from person to person, depending on weight and build, so do try them out before you buy.

Hum like a bee

Yes, *really*. 'This is a fantastic technique called "brahmaree",' explains Anandi, [The Sleep Guru](#). 'Try to spend at least 10 minutes humming like a bumble bee before you go to bed. This creates a deeply healing vibration and relaxes the mind and nervous system, getting rid of negative emotions and stimulating the sleep hormone serotonin. It will also draw you inwards away from the constant train of distracting thoughts. Just close your mouth, inhale through your nose and exhale by humming.' (OK, it might really annoy your partner - but it'll be worth it if it works!)

Soften your body

Still having trouble drifting off to sleep? NLP practitioner Steve Tromans suggests this relaxation technique: 'As you lie there, allow your head to sink into the pillow and, in your mind, hear the word "soften", said softly and gently. Focus on your left shoulder and pretend the word "soften" is coming from inside there. Allow your shoulder to relax, then repeat with the right shoulder, the hip joints, the eye muscles, anywhere you like... The important thing is to do it slowly and gently, and just let go.'

Give up smoking

Ready for one more reason to quit cigarettes for good? Smoking can keep you awake at night. Nearly 12 per cent of current smokers have trouble falling asleep, 10.6 per cent wake in the night and 9.5% wake too early in the morning, according to recent research from the University of Florida. The figures for non-smokers were much lower, while those who quit smoking during the study found their sleep soon improved. Researchers found that for each cigarette smoked, total sleep time decreased by an average 1.2 minutes.



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Write away your worries

Never under-estimate the power of a to-do list. If you tend to lie in bed worrying about everything you need to do the following day, get in the habit of writing a list of what needs to be done - and how you're going to tackle it - before you go anywhere near your bedroom. The goal is to avoid doing these things late at night when you're trying to sleep. 'If it's work that keeps you awake, it's a good idea to write your to-do list before leaving work,' advises Dr Nerina Ramlakhan. 'That way, you won't spend your evening worrying about work and it's less likely to be on your mind if you wake up in the middle of the night.'

Eat well in the evenings

Make sensible food choices in the evening - and you should find you drop off more easily at bedtime. 'Keep your tummy unburdened by avoiding greasy, overly spicy or heavy meals such as takeaways or high-carb pasta or rice dishes,' advises nutritionist Dr Sam Christie from [Nature's Best](#). 'That way, you'll avoid being kept awake by heartburn, indigestion or flatulence. Also, avoid stimulants such as caffeine after 6pm and opt for chamomile tea or warm milk instead. And if stress is definitely a factor in your wakefulness, try taking the calming herbal extract valerian an hour or so before bed.'

Don't pressure yourself

You know the drill: the more pressure you put on yourself to sleep, the less likely you are to actually fall asleep. 'This is often the case the night before a big event or early get-up,' says Dr Nerina Ramlekha. 'In these situations, it's helpful to replace the word "sleep" with "rest". So tell yourself it doesn't matter if you don't sleep tonight. You're just going to use the time to rest.' Another tip? If you've been awake for more than 20 minutes in the middle of the night, don't just lie there fretting. Get up, go to another room and read a book or make a cup of chamomile tea - and only go back to bed when you're feeling sleepy again.