

TIRED AND TESTED:

7 SLEEP SOLUTIONS

Just going to bed early isn't a guarantee of restful slumber. But there are numerous products, therapies and services designed to improve sleep quality – we put the latest to the test

1 THE PILLOW

The theory: Most of us sleep on at least two pillows, but osteopath Kulwinder Bajwa says raising the head too high throws the spine out of alignment, which leads to restlessness. 'The right height of pillow depends on the distance between shoulder and neck, which can vary widely,' he says. 'The right pillow means longer hours of deeper, more restorative sleep.' Bajwa's prescription pillow service, available at osteopathy clinics across the UK, bases pillow size on your individual shoulder-to-neck measurement (from £49.99, goldilocks-pillows.co.uk for clinics). Alternatively, you can buy a bespoke pillow online,

designed by sleep guru and osteopath Sammy Margo, by filling out a questionnaire about your sleeping position, body size and personal preferences (£14.99, thegoodsleepexpert.co.uk). 'To avoid problems, good posture is as important in bed as it is during the day,' says Margo.

Cost: From £14.99

Sleep success rating: ***

'I measured as '1', the flattest pillow in the Goldilocks range. Sleeping on it felt very odd at first, especially as it's made of fairly firm foam, and I sleep on soft feather pillows. But by the third night, I loved it. My husband said I'm far less restless and I seem to wake up feeling less achey.' Sally Brown

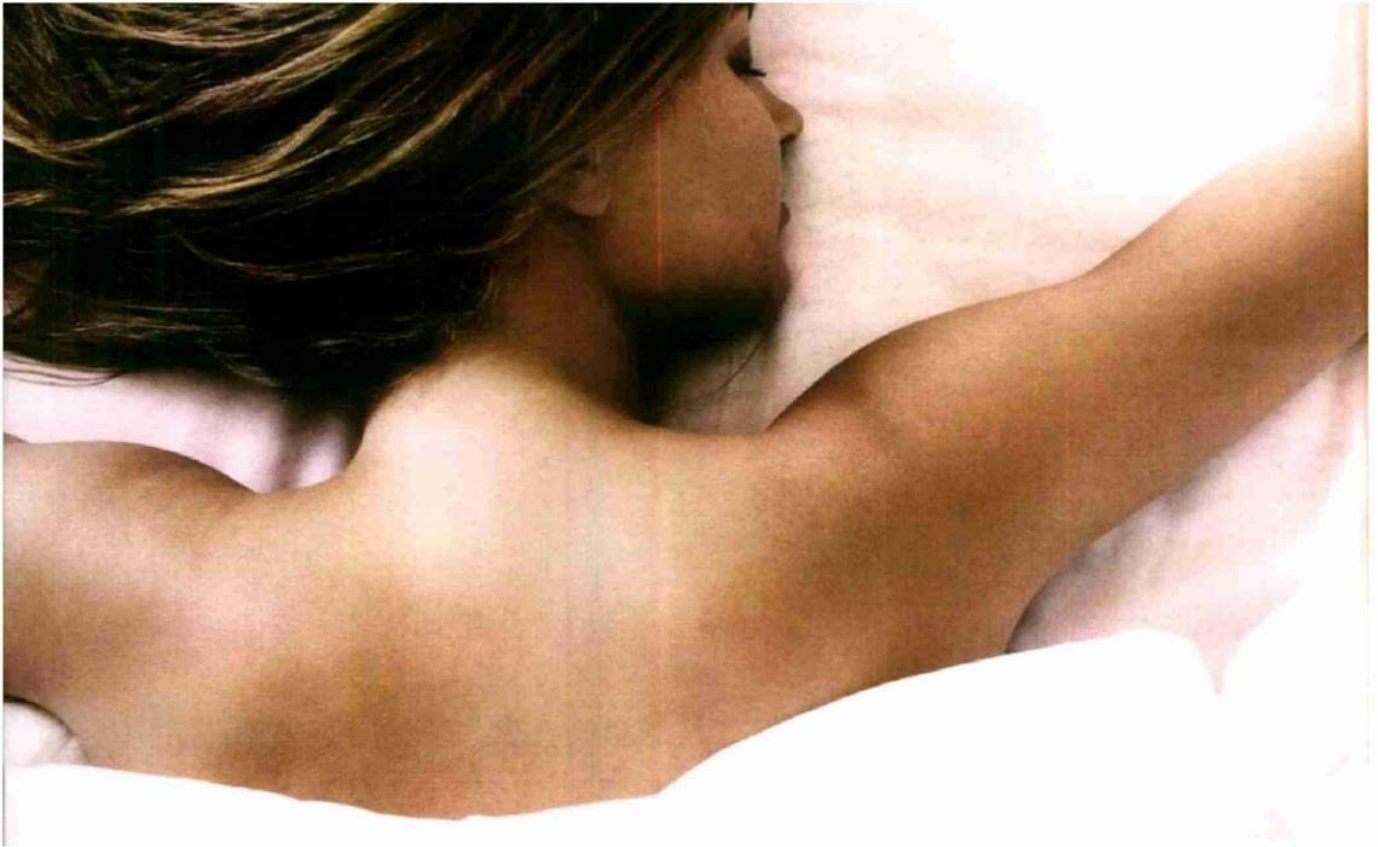
2 THE MONITOR

The theory: Jawbone UP is a slim bracelet that logs your movements during the day, and also during sleep. By synchronising it with an app on your phone, it produces a graph of phases of light and deep sleep through the night, tracking how long it took you to get to sleep, or how often you woke up. You can note your mood and energy levels, so you get an overview of how you're affected by your sleep habits.

Cost: £99.95 from jawbone.com or Apple stores.

Sleep success rating: ****

'An addictive bit of kit that taught me a lot about my sleep habits, like how my



deep sleeping periods are drastically reduced if I've had wine in the evening. I'd known alcohol reduces sleep quality but seeing proof motivated me to cut it down to once or twice a week.' Sally Brown

3 THE THOUGHT PROCESS

The theory: Sleep problems can be caused by unhelpful beliefs about our ability to sleep, says Professor Espie. Thinking of yourself as a poor sleeper sends unconscious messages to the brain meaning you won't sleep well. A new online course using CBT, Sleepio, can help replace unhelpful thinking, like 'I won't cope at work if I don't get to sleep' with more realistic ones, such as, 'I've coped before when I've felt tired.'

Cost: From £6.99 per week (from

sleepio.com or boots.com).

Sleep success rating: *****

'After having six children, I had trouble getting to sleep and staying asleep. I'd be anxious about going to bed and was given sleeping pills eventually. But I never liked that idea. This programme has changed my mindset. I now have a set wind-down routine to follow, and I no longer feel anxious about going to bed. I know what to do to ensure I get a good night.' Sheila Fitzgerald

4 THE MUSIC

The theory: Drifting off to relaxing music can improve sleep quality. 'A carefully created playlist of relaxing songs helps the body prepare for sleep by lowering blood pressure and bringing us into a much more relaxed mental state,' says Dr Tomas Chamorro-

Premuzic, a psychologist from University College London. He recommends long, repetitive songs with no lyrics and fewer than 80 beats per minute – so get out the old Ibiza chill-out albums.

Cost: Free (if you use music you already have). For maximum comfort, invest in

SleepPhones (£29, sleepphones.co.uk), headphones in a super soft headband.

Sleep success rating: ****

'I'm studying part-time for a Masters and need to be up by 7am for work so I'm always tired. But recently I went to the UK's first Sleeping Gig, held by Direct Line. We lay on chaise longues in masks and blankets, listening to an orchestra play soothing versions of Coldplay and Snow Patrol songs. I didn't expect to, but I drifted off to sleep and felt fantastic when I woke up. I now use music to help

me wind down for bed and I'm definitely getting more sleep.' Isabel Friar

5 THE CLOCK

The theory: We're meant to go to sleep when it's dark and get up when it's light, so getting up in the dark can disrupt us. The Lumie BodyClock Go alarm clock mimics dawn, waking you with a gradually increasing light. Waking like this kick-starts your body clock, so you not only have more energy by day, but should sleep deeper at night.

Cost: £74.95 (from lumie.com).

Sleep success rating: ***

'I used this to wake up at 3.30am to catch a flight. It felt a bit more like someone putting on a light than a "gradual awakening", but getting up did feel effortless

“I thought I slept in the dark but doing a check of the room, I realised there was ambient light from a digital radio and a charger. I was amazed at the difference switching them off made”

and I wasn't as tired as I expected to be during the day.' Sally Brown

6 THE GURU

The theory: Many people are shallow breathers, which means the sympathetic nervous system is perma-

nently activated, raising heart-rate and blood pressure and making deep sleep hard, says Sleep Guru Anandi, who overcame her insomnia using yogic breathing techniques, and runs Breathe Yourself To Sleep workshops in London.

Cost: £70. There is also a DVD, *The Practice Of Sleep*, which costs £14.95 from thesleepguru.co.uk.

Sleep success rating: ****

'Learning to breathe more slowly and deeply has been life-changing for me, as it stops my anxiety levels creeping up during the day. I used to lie awake for ages with my mind racing. One of the techniques I learned was bumblebee breathing – where you make a humming sound on each outbreath. If I do 10 minutes of this before getting into bed, I fall asleep straight away.' Natasha Green

7 THE DARK

The theory: There is mounting evidence that we're designed to sleep in the pitch dark, and even the glow from a clock can disrupt the release of melatonin, the hormone that triggers the deepest sleep, and is also linked with reduced rates of certain types of cancer.

Cost: Free

Sleep success rating: *****

'I thought I slept in the dark but doing a check of the bedroom, I realised there was ambient light from a digital radio and a charger. I was amazed at what a difference switching them off made – complete darkness seemed to create a deeper sleep that left me feeling more refreshed. It's such a simple thing but it made a really noticeable impact on the quality of my sleep.' Sally Brown