

## Health

It should be easy, right? Yet for those of us who battle with insomnia, sleep can be anything but. Follow these tips and you'll soon be nodding off...



# How to sleep LIKE A BABY

It seems we are a nation divided — and no, we don't mean Brexit. We're talking about sleep.

On one side, there are those who nod off the second their heads hit the pillow, and then there are those who toss and turn for hours on end.

According to official figures, one third of us struggle to get a good night's sleep.

Worse, soaring numbers of children are being admitted to hospital for sleeping disorders.

Admissions for under-16s have risen by 44 per cent in the last

five years, which experts blame on mental health problems, social media and obesity.

Long term, the clinical consequences of untreated sleep disorders are grave, and are linked with numerous serious illnesses, including high blood pressure, strokes and depression.

Improving our sleeping habits can have huge benefits to productivity and our ability to focus at school or work.

So what can we do to get that elusive good night's sleep?

Here Anandi The Sleep Guru gives her top tips...

and secrete melatonin can be influenced by how late you go to bed, by artificial light and by seasonal changes.

If you find you're deficient, try deep breathing, meditation, switching off electrical devices and going to bed and getting up earlier — these can all help.

### Hum like a bumble bee

Humming creates a deep, healing vibration.

It relaxes the mind and the nervous system, and helps the body make sleep-inducing melatonin.

Close your mouth, inhale through your nose and exhale by humming.



### Check your hormones

To begin with, go and ask your GP about having a melatonin test.

Low melatonin levels are associated with depression and the acceleration of the body's ageing process. A test will tell you if your sleep hormones are working properly.

How well you absorb

### Massage your jaw

People who have trouble sleeping often grind their teeth. This makes the jaw muscles extremely tight, creating stress in the body.

To counteract this, find the corner of your jaw bone with your middle fingers and move the finger in small circular motions as deeply as possible. Do this for 30 seconds five times a day.

### 'Surrender' your breath

Many people are shallow breathers, which raises your heart rate and blood pressure and making deep sleep hard.

Anandi suggests lying on your back and practising 'surrendered breath'.

When you 'try' to breathe there is a certain amount of tension in the body, so your rib cage is tense and you can't expand it.

When your body is completely relaxed, you create far more space in your body to breathe.

### The 10-minute yoga pose

Viparita karani, or the legs-up-the-wall pose, is a restorative yoga position that anyone can do, and an excellent natural sleep remedy.

It can even be beneficial if you wake up in the night.

The move stretches and relieves tiredness in the back of the legs and feet.

Use it as part of your routine to unwind before sleep. Turn off technology, put your pyjamas on and light some candles, then lie on your back, flat on the floor with your legs straight up against the wall. Open your arms out to the sides and exhale.

Hold this pose for 10 minutes to completely relax your system.



### Eat cherries and dates

Natural forms of melatonin can be found in dates, Montmorency cherries (a type of sour cherry) and grapes, while bananas, oatmeal and milk will boost its production in the body.

To further help your body create its own melatonin, take a natural sleep and anxiety relief supplement, such as Neuro Rest (£24, utmostme.com), which contains magnesium to help calm the nervous system.

### Have a laugh

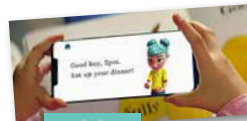
Make time to watch your favourite comedy. Laughter promotes oxytocin, another happy hormone, which helps you relax and strengthens your immune system.

### Go outside every day

We need natural light to boost production of serotonin and melatonin, and the quickest way to get this is to go outside. If you walk a lot, your brain goes into a relaxed state, leaving you more creative and grounded.

Edited by XXX XXXXX

For more information, visit [thesleepguru.co.uk](http://thesleepguru.co.uk)



### 'Appy FAMILIES

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## Our Health SOS

# TERROR on the LABOUR WARD

**I was having contractions and I thought the pain couldn't get any worse. But what happened next was unbearable**



Me, Rob and Esme

From Illy Goodall, 27, of Chichester, W Sussex

All I could think about was Haribo. Ever since I'd fallen pregnant, I just wanted to eat sweet things.

But when I got to 20 weeks, my sugary cravings started to make me feel strange and I was always thirsty.

I mentioned it to my doctor, who carried out tests.

'I'm afraid you have gestational diabetes,' he said.

Daily insulin injections helped, then at 37 weeks doctors decided to induce me.

After 12 exhausting hours of labour, I didn't have the strength to push my baby out, so I had an epidural. But it didn't work, so I had to have another one.

When I eventually gave birth to my daughter Esme, I was more relieved than anything. The labour had been so unbearable that I was in shock.

As Esme was taken away for checks, my husband Rob helped me into the shower. But on the way back to bed, I felt ill and I had to sit in a wheelchair.

By the time I was taken back to the ward, I was in excruciating pain and when I stood up, I vomited. The only way I could ease the agony was to stay lying down.

'I think something went wrong with the epidural,' the

anaesthetist told me. 'It looks like you're suffering a post-dural puncture headache.'

The epidural had punctured the tissue surrounding my spinal cord and fluid was leaking out, causing a migraine and pain in my neck and shoulders.

'This is the worst pain I have ever known,' I said to Rob.

I was unable to hold Esme or breastfeed her, so I found it difficult to bond.

*Am I normal for not having special feelings towards my baby?* I fretted.

I felt like the worst mother in the world.

To cure the headache, a blood patch was taken from

my arm and injected into my spinal cord.

It worked for 24 hours and I was sent home. But that evening, my headache was back and I started vomiting.

Back in hospital a doctor told me: 'You have a bleed on your brain.'

'Am I going to die?' I asked. He said it should heal by itself and, after two weeks of bed rest, I felt better and finally I was able to bond with my daughter.

Now Esme is one and I feel closer to her than ever.

I want other mothers to be aware of the complications that can occur during an epidural.

When you're in labour, you just want something to ease the pain, but I had no idea of the risks.

## Post-dural puncture headache

**What is it?** A type of headache that occurs after having an epidural or spinal anaesthetic.

**What are the symptoms?** A severe headache felt at the front or back of the head, which gets worse when sitting or standing. It can also cause neck pain, sickness and a dislike of bright lights.

**What's the treatment?** A blood patch, which usually cures the headache within 24 hours. A second blood patch may be needed.

**Where can I find out more?** [nhs.uk/conditions/epidural](http://nhs.uk/conditions/epidural)

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Edited by Safia Yallaou

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