

Tips to Sleep Well by Into Wellbeing

A good place to start here, is from the beginning of your day. We have body clocks (circadian rhythms) for different organs and the Suprachiasmatic Nucleus is our master clock, like the conductor of an orchestra. Our body likes rhythm and routine and that's exactly what we should try to give it in order to function well.

- Wake up at the same time every day (give or take an hour). Set an alarm clock, yes, an alarm clock and not your phone and do this even at the weekends. If you're struggling to wake up, switch on a light, our body responds to it and wakes us up.
- Make a hot drink sit by a chair near the patio or even better, go outside in the garden and soak up natural light. This will release serotonin, our feel-good chemical. Meditate for 10 minutes.
- Do some gentle exercise and stretches for another 10 minutes.
- Eat breakfast, never skip it, as your blood sugar levels will drop significantly.
- Make sure all your eating and healthy snacking is consumed roughly at the same time of day. Make this a good and relaxed experience so that your digestive system works properly. Eat within your 10 - 12 hour window (I usually have breakfast at 7:00am, so I stop eating at 7:00pm).
- Limit caffeine, alcohol and nicotine, all which effect sleep. It is advised to only drink coffee before midday. Do not despair! You won't need a 3:00pm pick me up if your lifestyle is a healthy one. Nicotine is known to stay in your system for 14 hours!
- Exercise daily for at least 20 minutes. It can strengthen circadian rhythms, promote daytime alertness and help bring on sleepiness at night. Exercise has also been shown to improve sleep for people with sleep disorders, including insomnia and obstructive sleep apnoea. Make sure any vigorous exercise is done by the early evening.
- Come off all devices by 8:30pm. These give off a blue light which keeps us awake. Most phones do have a night-time mode which dims the light; however, we also need to think about winding down rather than responding to texts or emails, or whatever it is that is stimulating our mind. Tell family and friends. Mine know not to expect a response after 8:00pm, it's on charge and kept in the kitchen. They know that if there is an emergency, they should ring me on the house phone.
- Try not to have your shower straight before bed as it stimulates the body. Also consider having a warm bath once a week with Epsom salts and soak in it for at least 15 minutes with no soapy products. It's great for magnesium intake and really helps aching muscles.
- Have a de-caffeinated herbal tea or hot water. This is good for hydration and can stop you feeling hungry.
- Make sure your bedroom is not too hot or cold. 17 degrees Celsius is the ideal sleeping temperature. Ensure a window is slightly open for fresh air.
- Have good blackout blind or curtains. As we said earlier, exposure to blue light keep us awake. This also goes for streetlamps. Television also emits a blue light; however, it doesn't have the same affects as a phone or tablet which is a lot closer to you. Having said that it's not ideal to have the T.V on but if you do, make sure your

watching something light that isn't going to keep you alert. If you need a night light for children, a red light has less impact on your circadian rhythm.

- Make your bedroom a comfortable place to be.
- If you like to read, it shouldn't be something which is going to keep you alert e.g. thriller.
- If you haven't fallen asleep within 30 minutes of trying, try a body scan meditation. It's best to know it by heart and not rely on a device. I'm pretty sure you won't get to finish it.

The NHS also have some tips on their website: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/>