

## SLEEP HACKS

Houston, we have a problem. We aren't sleeping enough, and we aren't sleeping well. Some studies say 70% of adults in the US don't sleep well. Maybe you are one of them. Sleeping well means that you are in REM and deep sleep enough to feel rested when you wake up. Rested and ready is how we are supposed to feel when we wake up. Getting tired in the middle of the day may be caused by other health issues, like lack of nutrition, but many times, it is caused by a lack of good sleep. Lack of sleep takes months and years off our lives, and it leads to chronic disease.

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/how-sleep-works/sleep-facts-statistics>

Most people reading this are looking for sleep aids, helps, and hacks. There are many out there. You have biohackers like Dave Asprey, neuroscience professors like the Sleep Diplomat, Matthew Walker, and many medical doctors with great advice for better sleep. There are a lot of overlapping hacks, so I will try to distill them down to a simple list of attainable sleep hacks that will get you a better night's sleep. Some of these things will necessitate a bit of a life change, and others will require spending some money. My advice is to go with what you think would serve you the best, what you will stick to for weeks to find out if they work, and move forward to other hacks. Happy sleeping!

**Circadian rhythm.** Create a default circadian rhythm and stick to it. Going to bed, to sleep, and waking at approximately the same time every day and night. This goes for eating as well, especially dinner.

**Sunlight.** Upon waking, get 10 minutes of sunlight in your face to help set your circadian rhythm.

When the sun goes down, your body begins to change to prepare you for sleep. Cooperate with the sun and slow down when the sun goes down.

**Bedtime routine.** Develop a bedtime routine that signals your body 1-3 hours before sleep to relax. This could be an herbal tea like chamomile, breathing exercises, a warm bath, or whatever would put you into a relaxed state.

**Stretching.** A stretching routine before bed can be helpful when coupled with breathing exercises to reduce stress and relax you. When you are restless at night, you can also use static stretching (30-second hold on the stretches) to calm your muscles and allow you to lie still enough to fall back asleep.

**Detox thoughts.** Write down everything you are thinking about, including your next day's tasks. Also, practicing gratitude helps your brain go into homeostasis.

**Breathing.** Breathing exercises that reduce stress and relax the body and brain include six count inhale with a eight count exhale (through the nose). Do this right as you get into bed or just before.

**Work.** Stop working at least three hours before bed. This will allow your brain to slow down and not focus on tasks or responsibilities.

**Reduce blue light.** Wear blue blocker glasses. After sundown, reduce your exposure to blue light by wearing blue blocker glasses. This will increase melatonin production and reduce cortisol, which signals your body to sleep.

**Lighting.** Replace your LED lights with dimmable yellow hue lights.

**Baths.** Some people find that a cool bath is what they need to prepare for sleep, while others benefit from a warm bath to relax.

**Stimulation.** Reduce any nighttime heart-pounding screen time. You don't want to stimulate your body with high-action, argumentative, bad news, or failed videos.

**Screens.** Eliminate screen time at least an hour before bed.

**Night Mode.** If you are going to look at your device, switch to night mode. Also, Kindle has a better night mode than the iPad, in my opinion, so read from that or a dim, yellow reading light with blue blocker glasses.

**Eating.** Stop eating at least three hours before bedtime.

Eat a high-protein and low-carb dinner.

Stop consuming caffeine 10 hours before bedtime.

Stop drinking alcohol at least three hours before bedtime.

**Hydration.** This critical aspect of health cannot be overlooked when trying to get a good night's sleep. If you drink too much too late, you will wake up to urinate. If you don't drink enough, your body won't rest well because it is dehydrated. Avoid drinking water alone before bed, and use a little quality salt (3-4 grains) with your water to help your body absorb it.

**Nicotine.** This substance is a stimulant. Often, smokers will wake up because their brain needs the nicotine. Having a "smoke" before bed may be a relaxing pattern, but it still stimulates the body.

### **Bedroom atmosphere.**

Make your bedroom a space for relaxation. That means you don't work there, so declutter it and create a spa-like feel. You can add an essential oil diffuser with lavender or other relaxing oils.

Make your bedroom completely dark.

Set your thermostat to 65 degrees. It is the optimal sleep temperature.

Use a cooling pad on your bed like Sleep 8 or Chilipad.

Use a mattress and bedding that is organic or natural.

Use the right pillow. The more organic or natural, the better. It should give some support but not raise your head in an unnatural position, whether lying on your back or your side. Some people also like a body pillow for comfort and a natural side position.

Put soft music on low.

Minimize the radio frequencies. Charge your phone away from your bed or in another room, and turn off your home wifi.

**Supplements.** Some are useful, and some that are a waste of money. I like valerian root and magnesium. Others, like Qualia Night, have a host of vitamin, mineral, amino, and herbal ingredients.

Take a nighttime magnesium supplement. Magnesium Glycinate, magnesium citrate, and even magnesium carbonate can work well. They are in pill form or in a powder to drink before bedtime.

**Exercise.** Exercise daily, including a post-dinner walk or some form of mild movement.

The absence of exercise can cause all kinds of problems, including sleep. Working late at night can raise the naturally declining cortisol levels, keep you awake, and ruin your sleep.

**Touch.** Create opportunities for an oxytocin release. This includes hugging, kissing, and being intimate. It helps you sleep.

**Tracking.** You can track your sleep with devices that tell you things like body temp, which you can adjust with some of the hacks above. They may also help you see if what you ate, drank, watched, and made a visible difference in your sleep. The problem is that if these devices are transmitting, so you are sleeping with EMFs nearby. That's bad.

The Oura ring only emits EMFs when it is syncing with your phone. I have found wearing it to help me see what lifestyle choices positively and negatively affect my sleep. It also helps me see how much total sleep I got compared to how much time I had in bed, as well as REM and Deep sleep.

**Mouth taping.** It sounds weird, but this hack forces you to breathe through your nose, which is how we are designed to breathe at rest. It also helps with snoring for some! Don't use duct tape. You can purchase mouth tape from Amazon.

**Napping.** Avoid napping in the evening, but a quick nap (15-27 minutes) in the early afternoon is normal and helpful.

**Alarm clocks.** Our bodies can be trained to wake up at a particular time or first light, but I suggest using an alarm clock to go to bed.

**Laying awake in bed.** If you find yourself frustrated because you are not sleeping, get up and do something. Put on your blue blocker glasses and be productive, watch something funny, or write down what is racing around in your mind. Making your bed a place of frustration is not good for the psyche.

**Grounding.** Some swear by it, but no actual data on sleeping exists. There are pads you can put under your sheets, or you can ground yourself barefoot on the earth before bed.

**Medications.** Research your medications, and if sleep issues are an unintended effect of the medication, talk to your doctor about switching.

**Sleep disorders.** If you have or suspect you have a sleep disorder, such as insomnia, Somnambulism, Sleep apnea, or other issues that prevent a good night's sleep, you should see a professional.