

SLEEP — PART ONE

Thanks to Michelle Brenton, Heather Whittaker, Mary Jo Maxwell and Eileen Anderson

From MindBodyGreen.com

Sleep issues can be devastating to overall health and well-being, as anyone who's suffered a night of tossing and turning knows. While it's frustrating to live with insomnia and other sleeping difficulties, there is hope! Here are 12 tips to help you get peaceful, blissful sleep:

1. Turn off the blue light one hour before bedtime. Blue light is the most disturbing light when trying to go to sleep because it immediately shuts down your production of melatonin, the major sleep hormone that we produce at night. Sources of blue light include computers, iPads, cellphones, video games, and television.

2. Avoid caffeine after noon. Many of us fail to realize how much caffeine can impair our ability to get to sleep and remain asleep. Most of us take four to six hours to metabolize caffeine. However, many of us may take much longer. Caffeine blocks the ability of a sleep-promoting chemical called adenosine to work. So think twice about that evening trip to a coffee shop or that dark piece of chocolate you crave.

3. Check that thermostat. Most studies demonstrate that room temperatures of between 62 and 70 degrees seem to work best for sleeping. The reason is that our core body temperature drops at night. In fact, this drop is a signal to the brain to sleep. A warm room can inhibit this process.

4. Avoid cured meats and aged cheeses such as Parmesan close to bedtime. Aged cheeses and cured meats contain an amino acid called tyramine. This amino acid, when ingested, increases the release of a hormone called norepinephrine. Norepinephrine is a wake-promoting hormone that is part of the fight-or-flight sympathetic nervous system — certainly not something you want occurring when you're trying to fall asleep.

5. Eat sleep-promoting foods. Snacks that are high in tryptophan such as dairy products, cheese, nuts, seeds, and grains, when combined with complex carbohydrates such as whole-wheat toast or crackers, can encourage the onset of sleep. The release of insulin associated with the carbohydrates promotes the movement of tryptophan into the brain. Tryptophan is then converted to serotonin and melatonin, which are sleep-promoting neurotransmitters.

6. Park your worries in another room. Don't take your worries or your work into the bedroom. In my book, *Sleep Soundly Every Night, Feel Fantastic Every Day*, I describe a technique called constructive worrying. At least three hours before bed, write down your concerns and your solutions. Then put them in a desk drawer and leave them there for the night.

7. Make sure your alarm clocks are heard, but not seen. The alarm clock should be in your bedroom to wake you up in the morning. Anxious glancing followed by calculating and then ruminating about "when will I get to sleep" or "how many hours of sleep do I have left" is a major cause of insomnia. If you're having trouble getting to sleep, put that clock where it can be heard but out of sight.

8. Exercise regularly. Study after study has shown that those who exercise regularly go to sleep easier and sleep more soundly than their sedentary friends. In fact, a very recent study has dispelled the myth about exercising too close to bedtime. In this study, even those who exercised close to bedtime slept better than those who did not.

9. Avoid excessive alcohol close to bedtime. Unfortunately, many alcoholics started out drinking to help them fall sleep. Although initially alcohol may induce sleep, as it leaves the body, it causes an increase in body temperature and triggers the sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight). As a result, it hinders your ability to stay asleep, and as time passes, you require more and more each night to fall asleep — not a good formula for health or sleep.

10. Quiet please. If you're having trouble falling or staying asleep, it could be the noise. The noise might be coming from your snoring spouse

or that loud music that your recently returned 28-year-old is playing. In any case, most of us need quiet to sleep. The remedy can be as simple as a good pair of custom earplugs or getting your spouse to see someone about that snoring ... or in some cases, considering a bedroom divorce.

11. Check that mattress. An old mattress can be an unrecognized source of poor sleep. Most mattresses should be changed after seven years. With the new memory foam and air number mattresses, you can customize the degree of firmness to your comfort level.

12. Relax those muscles. In the book, I describe a technique called progressive muscle relaxation. It's a sequential tensing and relaxation of various muscle groups accompanied by rhythmic breathing. It is simple to learn and very effective. It accomplishes two things: One, by relaxing muscles, tension is relieved, which in turn relaxes the mind. Two, the very activity takes your mind off everything else and serves as a form of meditation.

These are just some of the things you can do to help your sleep. The crucial point is to realize how important sleep is to good mental and physical health. So please make sleep a priority.

Sleep Apnea – Web MD

Sleep apnea is a serious sleep disorder that occurs when a person's breathing is interrupted during sleep. People with untreated sleep apnea stop breathing repeatedly during their sleep, sometimes hundreds of times. This means the brain -- and the rest of the body -- may not get enough oxygen.

There are two types of sleep apnea:

- **Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA):** The more common of the two forms of apnea, it is caused by a blockage of the airway, usually when the soft tissue in the back of the throat collapses during sleep.
- **Central sleep apnea:** Unlike OSA, the airway is not blocked, but the brain fails to signal the muscles to breathe, due to instability in the respiratory control center.

Am I at Risk for Sleep Apnea? Sleep apnea can affect anyone at any age, even children. Risk factors for sleep apnea include:

- Being male
- Being overweight
- Being over age 40
- Having a large neck size (17 inches or greater in men and 16 inches or greater in women)
- Having large tonsils, a large tongue, or a small jaw bone
- Having a family history of sleep apnea
- Gastroesophageal reflux, or GERD
- Nasal obstruction due to a deviated septum, allergies, or sinus problems

What Are the Effects of Sleep Apnea? If left untreated, sleep apnea can result in a growing number of health problems, including:

- High blood pressure
- Stroke
- Heart failure, irregular heart beats, and heart attacks
- Diabetes
- Depression
- Worsening of ADHD
- Headaches

In addition, untreated sleep apnea may be responsible for poor performance in everyday activities, such as at work and school, motor vehicle crashes, and academic underachievement in children and adolescents

Words of Wellness

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SLEEP — PART TWO

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Daily Nostril Breathing

Try grabbing hold of your nose for a minute of alternate side nostril breathing instead! A useful technique to practice daily, alternate breathing is an excellent tool when you need a quick mental and physical break.

A yogic breathing technique known in Sanskrit as Nadi Shodhan Pranayama, has been practiced for centuries. Here's how the translation breaks it down:

- **Nadi** — A channel or energy pathway through which the breath flows.
- **Shodhan** — Defined as cleansing and/or purifying.
- **Pranayama** — An extension of the life force, (prana) in particular, the breath.

In yoga, pranayama is more commonly known amongst practitioners as the “guidance of breath” and is used to relieve stress. Pranayama practiced with alternate nostril breathing can help calm the mind, soothe anxiety, balance the left and right brain hemispheres, and promote clear thinking. You're also likely to sleep better and generally feel more relaxed, overall.

Like many yoga practices, this simple yet challenging exercise brings you into the present, so that regrets and worries give way to the here and now. Being more present can only help you find more focus on the task at hand.

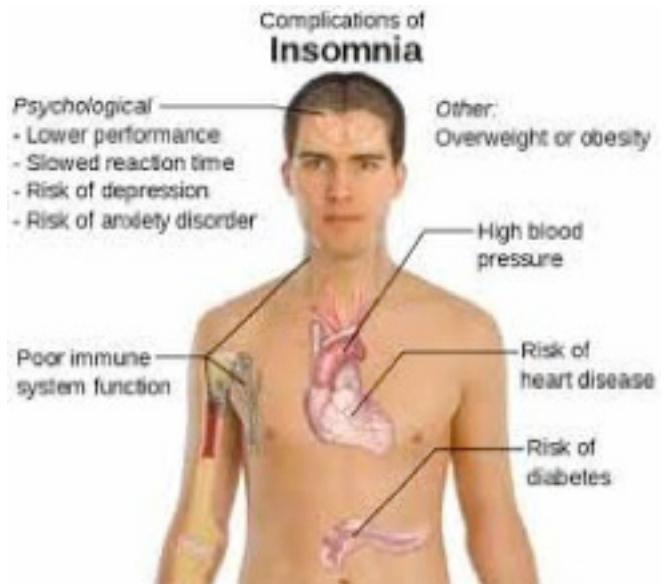
How to practice Nadi Shodhan Pranayama:

1. Find a convenient location in your home or outdoors where you won't be interrupted. Sit tall and comfortably, but careful to maintain relaxed shoulders and facial muscles. This is one of the challenges of any yoga position — to be focused, yet relaxed.
2. Softly place your left hand on your left thigh with palm up toward the ceiling. It is your choice if you want to make a mudra, by lightly touching your thumb and index finger at the tips in a very loose OK sign (this is known as chin mudra).
3. Close your eyes.
4. With your right hand, place the tips your index finger and middle finger gently between your eyebrows. Then place your ring finger and little finger on your left nostril and your thumb on your right nostril.
5. To begin the breathing exercise, lightly press your thumb down to close the right nostril and exhale a long, slow, and unforced breath through your left nostril.
6. Now breathe in from the same side (your left nostril).
7. Then press your left nostril gently with the ring finger and little finger while releasing your thumb from the right nostril. Exhale through your right nostril.
8. Then breathe in from your right nostril.
9. Continue exhaling then inhaling from alternate sides using your fingers to close each nostril.

Complete the exercise 9 times. Remember to exhale and then inhale through the same nostril, before switching sides.

You may feel a strange sensation as your physical and mental tightness from stress begins to melt away. The more you use pranayama, the better you become at staying in the moment and reaping its benefits. While eating healthy and getting a variety of exercise can help you cope more successfully with everyday stress, this simple breathing exercise can give you an extra boost that can sustain you in the long run.

Alternate side nostril breathing will help you harness the power of your breath and bring the channels of your life force, or prana, into perfect harmony.



Online Resources:

Try a sleep skills diary here.

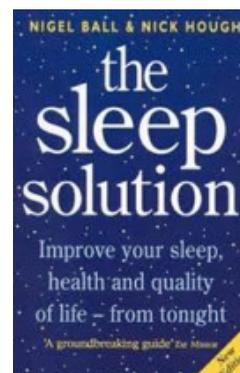
<http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/wellness-module/wellness-module-6-getting-a-good-nights-sleep#diary>

Sleep Apps and Gadgets

<http://dailytekk.com/2014/08/11/10-gadget-apps-to-sleep-better/>

Sleep Disorder assessment (online)

<http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/sleep-disorders-assessment/default.htm>



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You can find wellness activities from other school districts on the wellness website?

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