

# GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT *Sleep*

Resident contribution by Jana Panter, ND

You're tired of hearing about the importance of sleep, you're tired of trying unsuccessful sleep approaches, and, most importantly, you're tired of being so tired. Here are some effective tips to getting better sleep that I've collected over years of working with clients. Fair warning—some of these methods aren't easy and require lifestyle changes. Are you ready to get serious about getting a good night's sleep?

Assess your physical health. Go to the doctor for a thorough checkup. Be sure to include: blood-work measuring your hormone and vitamin D levels, risk assessment for sleepwalking or sleep

apnea, and all medication and symptoms that might be contributing to the problem. Follow up on any unclear or unresolved issues. If necessary, go to a sleep clinic for an overnight study.

Assess your mental health. Our lives have challenges. It's essential to find and nurture joy. Relationships (with people and pets), art, music, movement, and nature are vital to our well-being. Life changes, such as divorce or menopause, require extra self-care. Explore how other people have successfully navigated these changes. Be open to new methods of support like counseling, or other therapies.

Check your bedroom. Make sure your bed is good, the room is quiet, at a comfortable temperature and dark. If you get the sniffles at night remove all possible allergens and keep the bedding and the room well extra clean.

Exercise on most days. Practice diverse methods of cardio, stretching and strengthening.

Help prepare your body for sleep. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day. If you wake during the night and can't get back to sleep get up and do something else until you're tired. If you still can't sleep acknowledge you'll be tired that day but don't alter your bedtime.

Schedule downtime. Stop all screen time at least an hour before bed. If you're having trouble relaxing, in general, find a path towards meditation. While podcasts may work for some, many people need a class to get started. Schedule regular massage, pedicures or other relaxing therapies.

Support your digestion. Don't eat anything for 2-3 hours before going to bed. If you're open to improving your diet, work with a nutritionist, dietician or naturopath.

NO PETS IN BED. And if you have any allergy symptoms-no pets in the bedroom.

NO STIMULANTS or ALCOHOL. No sugar, tobacco, chocolate, coffee, green tea, or soda. Some people are ok as long they stop midday, some people may not be able to partake at all.

Acknowledge the depth of the problem. People can suffer for many years before seeking help. Recognize that it may take time, effort, lifestyle changes and experimentation to improve your sleep. But perhaps, even in your currently sleep-deprived state, you're able to appreciate how much better life will be if you wake refreshed, having enjoyed a good night's sleep.

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