

Adult Sleep Tips from KinderSleep

For many people, falling asleep, staying asleep, and waking up rested is a given. However for people who struggle with insomnia or other sleep disorders it can be an unimaginable gift. I suffered from insomnia for 2 years and this started my quest to learn all I could about adult sleep issues.

It is estimated that 80% of sleep problems are behaviorally based. This is fabulous news as it means that there is likely some behavior or behaviors that can be changed to improve sleep – there is something that people suffering from insomnia can do about it.

Here are some tips that can help improve night sleep and daytime alertness:

- **Maintain regular wake time and bedtime schedules** – Waking up at the same time and going to bed at the same time 7 days a week can help alleviate issues with insomnia and daytime fatigue
- **Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol too close to bedtime** – (This includes chocolate, coffee, and tea.) Some experts say to avoid these after the noon hour if you have a sleep problem
- **Avoid alcohol** – It can help induce sleep at the beginning of the night but as it starts to metabolize in the middle of the night it acts as a stimulant – disturbing sleep.
- **Exercise can promote good sleep** – Vigorous exercise should be done during the day – but not within 3 hours before bedtime
- **Mild exercise in the evening** – In the evening mild exercise such as a moderate walk or yoga can help the body get ready for sleep
- **Stay away from large meals before bedtime** – An evening snack, if needed, could consist of warm milk or a healthy snack such as nuts or berries. Some experts stay that you shouldn't eat within 3 hours of bedtime
- **Exposure to natural or outdoor light** – Exposure to natural light during the day helps to set your body's clock for sleep at night
- **Maintain a regular and relaxing bedtime routine** – This should include 3-5 rituals that you do every night before bed. Try to avoid emotionally upsetting conversations before bed or activities that can interfere with sleep
- **Don't lounge in bed** – Use your bed for sleep and sex only and try to avoid using your room for other activities. This will help avoid inadvertently training yourself to associate your bedroom with wakefulness

- **Make your bedroom a sanctuary for sleep** – Keep it a peaceful and pleasant place to be. Your room should be cool, dark, and quiet. White noise can be a powerful tool to aid sleep
- **Avoid clock watching** – Turn your alarm clock away from your bed or wear a sleep mask
- **Avoid brain overload** – Avoid TV, web surfing, and computer or electronic games 1 to 2 hours before bedtime. Instead read or relax with gentle brain stimulation
- **Don't sleep with your phone** – Turn your phone off or to silent before you go to bed. If you must be available for emergencies, set up a night-time profile that only provides the necessary alerts, blocking everything else
- **Avoid overtiredness** – Try to go to bed when you are tired but not overtired. Being overtired actually stimulates the awake hormones cortisol and adrenaline

Online Sleep Programs

The two online programs below are available to help you learn better sleep skills. They cost between \$50 to \$100 each.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-i) Online is a proven therapy to resolve insomnia. The system takes up to 6 weeks to see results. CBT-i is proven to be more effective than sleeping pills. <https://cbtforinsomnia.com> has an inexpensive, on-line program for overcoming insomnia.

Better Sleep Program Online <http://www.selfregulationskills.ca/programs/online-better-sleep/> Stress Management and High Performance Clinic at the University of Guelph.

Still Can't Sleep? Try these:

- When you lie in bed **think about RESTING** your body. Being calm and positive self-talk is important for sleep
- **Relax your tongue, chin and jaw first.** This will help rest your mind
- **If you are not sleeping** after being in bed for about 30 minutes get out of bed and try these until you feel sleepy then go back to bed:
 - **Do yoga** or relaxation exercises
 - **If you have something on your mind**, write it down and put it away so you can relax
 - **Play Sudoku** if your mind is racing or ruminating or try doing a puzzle or math problem
 - **Count to 100 by 3's** forward and try backwards

- **Do something boring** like folding laundry until you are tired
- Be sure to **keep the lights dim**
- **Adjust the lighting** on your computer: www.justgetflux.com
- **For lighting** and sunglasses that don't interfere with the production of melatonin: <https://www.lowbluelights.com/>
- **Bach Rescue sleep spray**: <http://www.bachflower.com/> (It's at every health food store)
- **Bedtime affirmation**: Many people have reported significant improvement and relief of sleep issues by doing this simple task of repeating a bedtime affirmation like this one. Give it a try or make up your own affirmation. Before bed every night read or recite the following:

“And while I rest tonight during that recuperative period called sleep, I wish my unconscious mind to retrieve the best program or programs used in the past that allow the mind to quiet such that I may enjoy a peaceful and restful night of wonderful sleep.”

Relax and simply allow it to happen at its own pace.

In addition to trying these behavioral strategies to improve sleep it is also a good idea to check with your doctor and check back with your doctor if you still not getting better sleep.