

Sleep Tips according to Dr. Mark Hyman

Here's how restore your natural sleep rhythm. It may take weeks or months, but using these tools in a coordinated way will eventually reset your biological rhythms:

- Practice the regular rhythms of sleep — go to bed and wake up at the same time each day
- Use your bed for sleep and romance only — not reading or television
- Create an aesthetic environment that encourages sleep — use serene and restful colors and eliminate clutter and distraction
- Create total darkness and quiet — consider using eyeshades and earplugs
- Avoid caffeine — it may seem to help you stay awake but actually makes your sleep worse
- Avoid alcohol — it helps you get to sleep but causes interruptions in sleep and poor-quality sleep
- Get regular exposure to daylight for at least 20 minutes daily — the light from the sun enters your eyes and triggers your brain to release specific chemicals and hormones like melatonin that are vital to healthy sleep, mood, and aging
- Eat no later than three hours before bed — eating a heavy meal prior to bed will lead to a bad night's sleep
- Don't exercise vigorously after dinner — it excites the body and makes it more difficult to get to sleep
- Write your worries down — one hour before bed, write down the things that are causing you anxiety and make plans for what you might have to do the next day to reduce your worry. It will free up your mind and energy to move into deep and restful sleep
- Take a hot salt/soda aromatherapy bath — raising your body temperature before bed helps to induce sleep. A hot bath also relaxes your muscles and reduces tension physically and psychically. By adding one-and-a-half to one cup of Epsom salt (magnesium sulfate) and one-and-a-half to one cup of baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) to your bath, you will gain the benefits of magnesium absorbed through your skin and the alkaline-balancing effects of the baking soda, both of which help with sleep
- Get a massage or stretch before bed — this helps relax the body making it easier to fall asleep
- Warm your middle — this raises your core temperature and helps trigger the proper chemistry for sleep. Either a hot water bottle, heating pad, or warm body can do the trick
- Avoid medications that interfere with sleep — these include sedatives (these are used to treat insomnia, but ultimately lead to dependence and disruption of normal sleep rhythms and architecture), antihistamines, stimulants, cold medication, steroids, and headache medication that contains caffeine (such as Fioricet)
- Use herbal therapies — try passionflower, or 320 mg to 480 mg of valerian (valeriana officinalis) root extract standardized to 0.2 percent valerenic acid one hour before bed
- Take 200 to 400 mg of magnesium citrate or glycinate before bed — this relaxes the nervous system and muscles.
- Other supplements and herbs can be helpful in getting some shuteye — try calcium, theanine (an amino acid from green tea), GABA, 5-HTP, melatonin, and magnolia.
- Try one to three mg of melatonin at night — melatonin helps stabilize your sleep rhythms.
- Get a relaxation, meditation or guided imagery CD — any of these may help you get to sleep.