



SEVEN SLEEP ESSENTIALS

Tips and tools for a restful night's sleep

1. EAT DINNER EARLY

Having a meal close to bedtime can be disruptive to your sleep and goes against your body's circadian rhythm, your natural sleep cycle, especially if it's a large amount of food. Your digestive system will be overworking as you sleep, which can negatively affect the quality of your deep (REM) sleep, causing sleeplessness and restlessness. It's a good idea to wait about three hours after eating before going to sleep. This allows some digestion to begin and gives time for the contents of your stomach to travel into your small intestine.

Eating dinner early can benefit your health by lowering your blood pressure, improving your sleep, improving your digestion, and increasing your metabolism which can minimise the risk of obesity and many chronic illnesses. Eating a light dinner early in the evening can lower your blood sugar levels and assist with weight loss.

2. STAY HYDRATED (LEMON WATER)

Lemon is a good source of folate, potassium and vitamin C. Lemon can alkalise your system, combat constipation and is good for your skin. Drinking plenty of lemon water throughout the day and before sleep will assist with flushing out toxins from your vital organs, it will deliver nutrients to cells, help regulate your body temperature, and prevent dehydration. It can be very calming to have a cup of warm lemon water before bed.

3. PREPARE YOUR SLEEP SPACE - CREATE A SLEEP RITUAL

Ambience can affect the quality of your sleep. Take time preparing your room to be an inviting, soothing and nurturing space to rest and relax in. Create your own comforting bedtime ritual: you might include things like dimming the lights, playing soft relaxing music, reading a book, keeping a journal, drawing, lighting a candle and having a warm caffeine-free drink. A comfortable mattress, fluffy pillows and soft, clean sheets will make it easier to doze off each night. Try keeping electronic devices out of the room. This can be a wonderful self-care practice.

4. PREPARE YOUR BODY – RELAX

You've had a light early dinner; you're hydrated and have prepared a harmonious sleep space. Now it's time to snuggle down in bed and check in with your body.

Set an intention to relax your entire body. This takes practice over time, so be patient, kind and gentle with yourself. Let go of tight muscles and release tension. You might like to start at the top of your head and work your way down to your toes, relaxing muscles as you go, or start at your feet and work your way up to your crown. Some people prefer to begin with their facial muscles and jaw. Find what works best for you, there are many guided recordings which can assist with this.

5. SCAN, REVIEW, AND RELEASE YOUR DAY

Drifting off to sleep can be difficult if you have a lot on your mind and have had a challenging day, you might be experiencing racing thoughts, the need to plan or defend, or negative thoughts or self-talk. These things can lead to sleep and health problems, anxiety, exhaustion and burn out. This simple yet effective practice may help ease and quiet your mind, preparing you for a

peaceful, deep, rejuvenating sleep. After relaxing your body, briefly scan through your day starting at the beginning and working forward to the present moment. Avoid getting stuck or caught up in any dramas or scenarios. Pause briefly at any moments you're unhappy with and forgive them, let them go. Forgive the people and situations involved, and most importantly forgive yourself. This doesn't need to be time consuming or complicated, it's a little bit like wiping the kitchen bench clean before switching off the light for the night. It's a practice to assist in letting go of your day, it can allow you to move into sleep with a clean slate.

6. PRACTISE GRATITUDE

Think of at least three things you are grateful for. It could be your friends, family, or the bird outside the window. Anything you appreciate. This can release feel good hormones like dopamine, serotonin, endorphins and oxytocin in your body and will allow you to surrender into sleep with a positive state of mind. When practised daily (before sleep and upon waking is good) it will become automatic and is extremely nourishing for your wellbeing.

7. BREATHE DEEP AND SLOW

Finally, focus on your breathing, without changing, fixing, or straining, breathing naturally and comfortably, and then noticing how your breath is beginning to become a little deeper and a little slower, and your body relaxes more and more with each breath. Allow yourself to let go. Feel the cool, clean, fresh air entering your nostrils as you inhale and notice the warm, soft air as you exhale. Feel the gentle rise and fall of your lower belly and chest. Enjoy this wonderful feeling.

I warmly invite you to begin practising these Seven Sleep Essentials tools at home. Eat dinner early, stay hydrated, prepare your sleep space and create a sleep time ritual, relax your body, scan, review and release your day, practise gratitude, and breathe deep and slow before surrendering to sleep.

Most importantly be kind and gentle with yourself, and... practise! Have fun with this, make it your own. Be creative!

I wish you a deep restorative sleep, and many wonderful dreams.

Rebecca Rivka