



# SOMNIANCE

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## How to sleep better

### Make sleep a priority

Schedule sleep like any other daily activity. Put it on your "to-do list", but don't make it the thing you do only after everything else is done. Allocate and reserve appropriate time for sleep according to your sleep need.

### How much sleep do I need?

The majority of adult people need between 7 and 9 hours of sleep. This is a professional opinion which is shared by Sleep Specialists internationally. There are people who are called "short sleepers" - they function well having only 5 - 6 hours of sleep. There is also a group of people called "long sleepers", they need between 9 and 10 hours of sleep. Longer sleep is required for children, teenagers and people recovering from some illnesses. Try to learn your own requirement for sleep and sleep only as much as you need to feel refreshed.

### Your sleep routine

For many people who have problems falling or staying asleep it might be tempting to "catch up" on sleep by staying in bed late, going to bed early, or having a nap during the day. But in fact this is likely to result in further deterioration of your sleep because you won't build enough "sleep pressure" which put us to sleep. So:

- Keep your own regular sleep schedule.
- Get up at the same time 7 days per week even during holidays.
- Avoid day naps.
- Only go to bed when you feel sleepy.

### Your bedroom

Your bedroom should be comfortable to best promote sleep. Use a comfortable mattress, make sure that the temperature is comfortable but cool (18 degree Celsius), and consider using blinds to block the light if needed. Make sure that noise level is reduced to a minimum.

Only use your bedroom for sleep and intimacy. You need to help you brain to build a strong link that your bedroom is a place to sleep. Remove TV, computer, mobile phones, tablets and other electronic gadgets from your bedroom. The artificial light from these devices can stimulate your brain and prevent you from falling asleep. By using these devices in your bed you also brake the association "bed=sleep" and your brain is becoming conditioned to use the bedroom for play/entertainment which distract you from sleep.

## **Your body**

### **Caffeine**

You need to help your body to switch off in the late part of the evening. So avoid stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine or other stimulating substances. Caffeine stimulates the brain and interferes with sleep. Caffeine inhibits chemical called adenosine, one the chemicals which helps our brain to fall asleep. If you are having trouble falling asleep, you should drink no more than 2 cups of coffee a day, and avoid caffeine after lunch. Common sources of caffeine: coffee, tea, soft drinks, energy drinks, chocolates, some pain relievers.

### **Nicotine**

Nicotine stimulates the brain, causes you to have trouble falling asleep and can make your sleep worse. Tobacco products like cigarettes and chewing tobacco contain large quantities of nicotine.

### **Alcohol**

If you drink alcohol around bedtime it may help you fall asleep. However, alcohol is bad for your sleep. The second part of your sleep can be much disrupted, Alcohol can make you wake up during the night, give you nightmares and can cause early morning waking. You also might have a headache the next morning.

### **Food**

Do not go to bed hungry. Hunger may disturb sleep. A light snack at bedtime may help you to sleep. Avoid greasy or heavy foods that could trigger gastric reflux and cause awakenings from sleep. Avoid excessive fluids in the evening. Stay with 1 cup of fluid within 4 hours of bedtime.

### **Exercise**

Regular exercise can help you to achieve better deeper sleep. Time your exercise to end 4 hours before your bedtime.

### **Effect of Light**

Try to catch morning natural light. Natural light suppress production of Melatonin, which is a body hormone associated with sleep. So, try to expose yourself to lot of natural daylight when it is time to be awake. You will get benefits of natural light even on a grey cloudy day.

Try to avoid light (this include artificial light) before bedtime to promote Melatonin production. Electronic devices contains large amount of blue light. This kind of light is the strongest for suppression of Melatonin production. So, it is strongly recommended to limit use of such devices in evening hours if you have difficulties falling asleep.

## **Your mind**

### **Sleep promoting rituals**

Try to find rituals that help you to relax each night before bed. This can include a warm bath or shower, a reading. You can practise relaxation, listen to calming music or sleep inducing audio programmes.

### **Worries**

If you find yourself always worrying at bedtime, try to designate a specific time during the day to write down your worries or complete a day diary. Make a plan of the things you would like to do the following day.

### **Do not try to fall asleep**

This only makes the problem worse. Sleep cannot be commanded or willed. Sleep will happen naturally. If you are unable to fall or stay asleep within 15-20 minutes, get up, leave the bedroom. Try a quiet activity (such as reading, colouring, knitting, listening to audio-book) and do not return to bed until you feel sleepy.