

ARE YOU GETTING A GOOD NIGHTS SLEEP?



Sleep problems are becoming more common these days with a 2016 survey revealing between 33% and 45% of Australian adults suffer from sleep conditions of different severities. If you are suffering from a serious sleep disorder, it's important you seek proper support from a medical health practitioner, however, in the meantime, here are a few lifestyle tips that can also help.

Take daily time-out. During the day cortisol, which is our get-up and go hormone, is highest in the morning and slowly decreases into the evening until we go to sleep. When we experience stress and anxiety during the day our cortisol levels can often be too high at night to fall asleep or we wake only a few hours after getting to sleep. Taking the time during the day to relax, even if just for a few deep and mindful breathes here and there, will go a long way towards a better sleep.

Reduce sugar intake. The link between sugar and anxiety is now well-known and anxiety is one of the leading causes of sleep problems. Avoiding sugar or at least minimising its consumption will immediately improve anxiety levels. If you do consume sugar or processed foods (same effect as sugar), try and eat them with protein such as nuts and seeds as it will help to slow down its absorption and prevent your blood sugar from spiking.

Eat more high magnesium foods. This essential mineral is a powerful muscle relaxant, can help to reduce pain as well as to help your mind calm down, all beneficial for a great nights sleep. Foods that are good sources of magnesium include spinach, sesame seeds, quinoa, pumpkin seeds, Brazil nuts, almonds, black beans and avocado.

Make a regular bedtime. It is essential for a healthy circadian rhythm to have a regular bedtime, keeping within half an hour of a set time. This will allow the body to regulate your sleeping hours and your waking time. When our rhythm is regular, our body is more efficient at completing the activities it needs to do during the night. These include detoxing, repairing and growing muscle tissue, producing hormones and restoring energy levels in the brain.

Avoid or minimise stimulants. Caffeine in coffee, tea and chocolate can have a lasting effect

as it promotes the release of cortisol keeping your levels too high for a deep nights sleep. Alcohol is a sedative, however it limits how deep you sleep and increases the likelihood of night wakings.

Avoid blue light. The type of light that comes from the sun and from our screens is known as blue light and interferes with our sleep hormone melatonin, keeping us awake for longer. When the sun goes down we naturally produce more melatonin, which increases our level of sleepiness. However, if we spend time in the evening, especially the hour before bed, our melatonin levels won't increase as much and we may have trouble getting to sleep. So its best to keep the hour before bed reserved for calming the mind and doing restful activities.

Exercise regularly. The primary way exercise works to improve sleep quality is by reducing conditions of hyper-arousal such as anxiety and stress as well as lowering depressive feelings. There is also a drop in body temperature a few hours after exercise that promotes sleep.

Above all, love yourself up in every way possible and you'll find a good nights sleep is a breeze as you know you absolutely deserve it.