



OPTIMAL SLEEP OPTIMAL BODY BALANCE

Sleep and Rest

We've all been told that rest is important. We've all been told that we need at least 8 hours of sleep each night to function optimally. We all know that we feel better, think better and perform better when we are well rested, and that our health and performance suffer from long-term sleep deprivation. So why don't we get the rest we need? Why don't we take the time to sleep? Part of the reason is that we may not know why rest is so important. Another part is that we say we don't have time to sleep. Well, once we know why rest is important, we can come up with the downtime.

Millions of Americans consciously choose to skimp on their sleep in the mistaken belief that sleeping fewer hours allows them to be more productive. Many people even look on the fact that they can "get by" on so few hours of sleep as a badge of honor. In fact, however, they are likely doing themselves a great deal of harm in the long run. Moreover, the night owls that sleep less to accomplish more are actually less creative and less productive than those who get adequate amounts of sleep. Dr. Richard Bootzin, professor of psychology and director of the insomnia clinic at the University of Arizona Sleep Disorders Center, conducted long-term research into normal sleep habits and patterns. He discovered that people who get seven to eight hours of sleep each night live longer, happier, healthier lives than those who skimp on sleep.





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There are no hard and fast rules about how much sleep is enough, because every individual's requirements are different. Most adults need about eight hours of sleep nightly in order to feel refreshed and operate at peak efficiency during the day. Children, especially very young children and adolescents, generally require more sleep than adults to be at their best. It is not uncommon for people to sleep less as they get older, especially after the age of sixty. Regardless of how many hours of sleep you get each night, if you wake up easily in the morning, especially if you rarely (if ever) need the services of your alarm clock, and if you can make it through the entire day without seeming to run out of steam or feeling drowsy after sitting quietly or reading for a while without needing caffeine or some other stimulant, you are probably getting enough sleep. However, if all these criteria do not apply, you need more sleep.

"So I miss a few hours of sleep each night - I feel okay" you say. Well, the following data says that you are fooling yourself, as sleep deprivation has been linked to:

Decreased creativity	Decrease quality of life	High blood pressure
Decreased performance	Decreased life span	Headaches
Decreased efficiency	Irritability	Increased PMS symptoms
Weakened immunity	Mild personality changes	Decreased enjoyment in life
Increased risk of heart disease	Fatigue!	

Not to mention it makes the pursuit of happiness darn near impossible and makes you a lot less fun to be around. So why wouldn't you sleep more???? "I don't have time", you say..."I can't sleep", you say. I say, "Get to bed earlier, or die earlier." Can I state it more clearly than that?

As for the not being able to sleep part - here's some stuff you can do:

Sleep Aids

First, some things to avoid:

- Avoid alcohol. A small amount can help induce sleep initially, but it invariably disrupts deeper sleep cycles later.
- Avoid tobacco. While smoking may seem to have a calming effect, nicotine is actually a neurostimulant and can cause sleep problems.
- Avoid caffeine-containing beverages after lunch.



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- Avoid bacon, cheese, chocolate, eggplant, ham, potatoes, sauerkraut, sugar, sausage, spinach, tomatoes, and wine close to bedtime. These foods contain tyramine, which increased the release of norepinephrine, a brain stimulant.
- Don't go to bed angry. Cool off before you hit the sack.
- Avoid taking nasal decongestants and other cold medications late in the day. While many ingredients in these preparations are known to cause drowsiness, they can have the opposite effect on some people and act as a stimulant.
- Do not stay in bed if you are not sleepy. Get up and move to another room and read, watch television, or do something quietly until you are really sleepy.
- Do not nap during the day if this isn't a normal thing for you to do. A short nap can help if you're exhausted or stressed out, but a nap that's too long will interfere with your body's sleep rhythm.
- Don't sleep late on weekends. Even if you are out late, try to get up within two hours of your usual time of waking.

Establish a set of habits and follow them consistently to establish a healthy sleep cycle.

Among them:

- In the evening, eat turkey, bananas, figs, dates, yogurt, and whole grain crackers or nut butter. These foods are high in tryptophan, which promotes sleep. Eating a grapefruit half at bedtime also helps some people.
- Go to bed only when you are sleepy.
- Use the bedroom only for sleep and sex – not for reading, working, eating, or watching television.
- Set an alarm clock and get out of bed at the same time every morning, no matter how you slept the night before. Once normal sleep patterns are reestablished, most people find that they have no need for an alarm clock.
- Exercise regularly in the morning, late afternoon or early evening – but not right before bedtime. Physical exertion is an excellent way to wake up or make your body tired so that sleep comes about more easily.
- Take a hot bath (not a shower) an hour or two before bedtime.
- Keep the bedroom comfortable and quiet. If too much quiet is the problem, try running a fan



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or playing a radio softly in the background. There are also devices available that generate “white noise” sounds like the ocean surf or a steady rain or waterfall that help people who are “quiet-sensitive” to sleep.

- Learn to put worries out of your mind. If you have occasional trouble getting to sleep, concentrate on pleasant memories or thoughts. Recreate a pleasurable time or event in your life and relive it in your mind. Learning a relaxation technique such as meditation or the use of guided imagery is extremely helpful in getting sleep patterns back to normal for many people.

For occasional sleeplessness, try the following herbs:

- California poppy, hops, kava kava, passionflower, skullcap, and valerian root, taken in capsule or extract form, are all good for helping to overcome sleeplessness. It is best not to rely on one herb on a regular basis, but to rotate among several. Take these herbs before bedtime.
- Catnip and chamomile have mild sedative properties. These herbs are safe even for children if taken in tea form. For adults, drinking chamomile teas several times throughout the day helps to calm and tone the nervous system, promoting restful sleep.

Rest

Rest is a very important part of allowing your body time to regenerate, heal and deal with the stresses of the day. There are several techniques to teach and allow the body to relax, including:

- Stretching/yoga
- Breathing techniques
- Tai Chi
- Biofeedback
- Meditation
- Visualization
- Progressive relaxation
- Massage and bodywork

Classes teaching you how to learn and incorporate these techniques into your life are available in a number of places. Do some research to see where they are offered. Try several and find a couple that work well for you.

Rest, sleep and relaxation are vital components of optimal health and well being. As holistic



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human beings, we must realize that not only does our diet, physical health and mental attitude affect our ability to deal with the stresses of the day and or sleep patterns, our sleep patterns and ability to deal with stressors affects or physical, emotional and spiritual health. If leading a truly happy, fulfilling and rewarding life is your goal, sleeping and getting adequate rest are vital steps toward achieving your goal. Learn what you need to learn, practice what you have been taught, and reap the benefits of listening to your body and enjoying your life.

Supplementation for Sleep

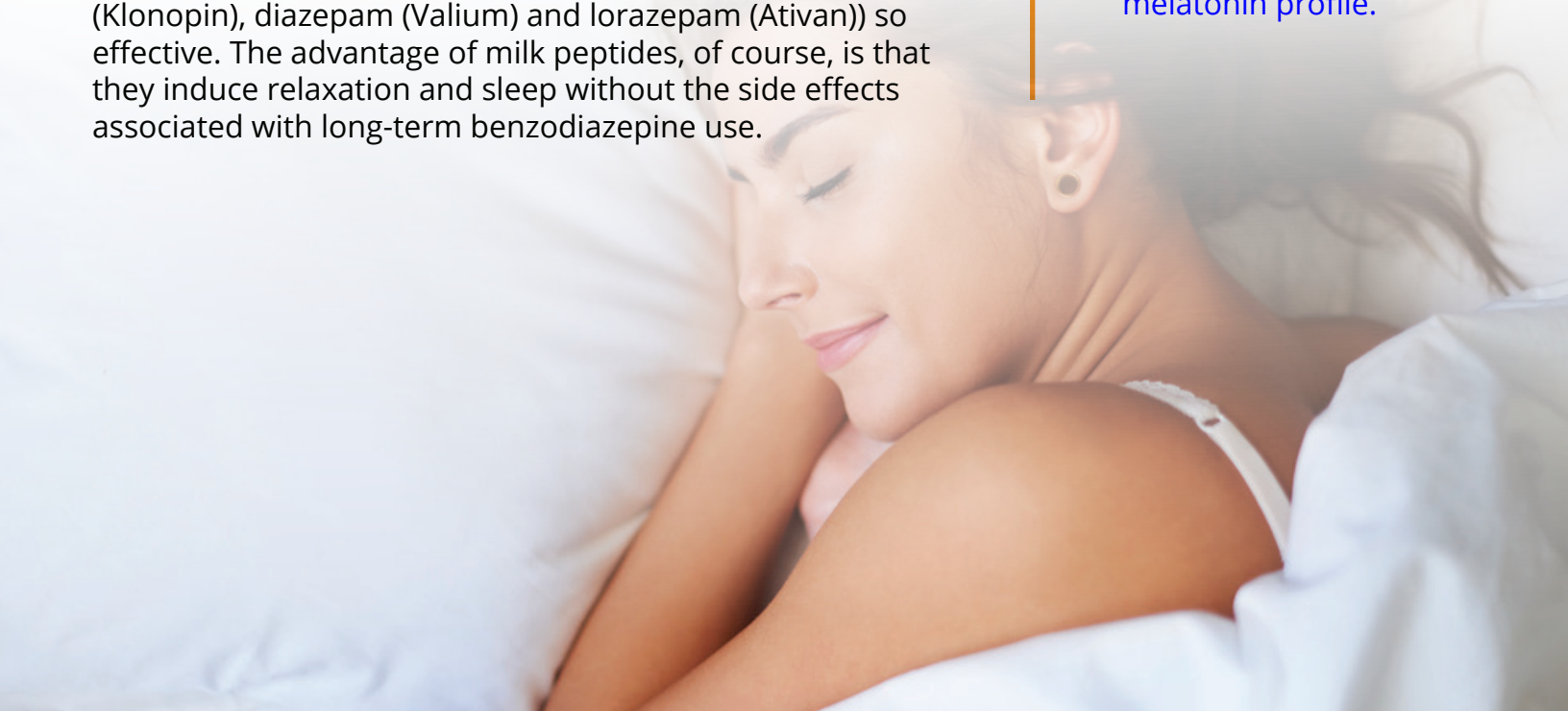
Research has shown that several supplements can help you get to sleep easier and stay asleep longer. Before taking any supplements, be sure and check with your doctor, especially if you are taking any prescription or over-the-counter medications.

Recent research has uncovered an incredible breakthrough that can help restore a normal sleep cycle. It turns out that nutrients found in cow's milk called bioactive peptides (which are chains of amino acids) exert a sedative effect on the brain and induce sustained sleep patterns. These bioactive milk peptides have been shown to act on the brain's GABA-A (gamma amino butyric acid) receptors, the same mechanism of action that makes the class of sedatives known as benzodiazepines (i.e., alprazolam (Xanax), clonazepam (Klonopin), diazepam (Valium) and lorazepam (Ativan)) so effective. The advantage of milk peptides, of course, is that they induce relaxation and sleep without the side effects associated with long-term benzodiazepine use.

Testing for Sleep

Salivary melatonin profile

This simple saliva test analyzes 3 saliva samples for the secretion pattern of melatonin. In addition to obesity, melatonin imbalances have been associated with Seasonal Affective Disorder, infertility, sleep disorders, and compromised immune function, and can provide insight into ways to improve sleep quality. Your results will be sent to you along with recommendations to help restore optimal sleep. [Click here for more information and to order a salivary melatonin profile.](#)





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In fact, published studies have shown these bioactive milk peptides effectively combat the stress response, blunt elevations of cortisol, promote sustained restful sleep patterns, support daytime cognition, and relieve anxiety. They are used widely in Europe under the trade name Lactium®; typical doses are 75-150 mg about 30-60 minutes before bedtime. We recommend a product called [Benesom](#) that combines this bioactive milk peptide along with melatonin and passionflower extract to promote a restful, relaxed state and relieve occasional sleeplessness; take 1-3 tablets 30 minutes before bedtime.

[Melatonin](#) supplementation has been shown to help assist in obtaining a restorative night's sleep while also helping to promote a healthy weight.

Hops, passion flower, skullcap, lemon balm and valerian root, taken in capsule or extract form, are all good for helping to overcome sleeplessness. It is best not to rely on one herb on a regular basis, but to rotate among several. Take these herbs before bedtime.

Catnip and chamomile have mild sedative properties.) These herbs are safe even for children if taken in tea form. For adults, drinking chamomile teas several times throughout the day helps to calm and tone the nervous system, promoting restful sleep.

Taking a B complex with breakfast and lunch can help your body make and use the neurotransmitters that it needs to help you sleep at night. This is especially helpful for those that fall asleep, but wake up with the inability to fall back asleep again.

Amino acids – if you suffer from insomnia, you may have a neurotransmitter imbalance that is preventing you from achieving good quality sleep. Review the section on [Neurotransmitter Imbalances](#) and get started on [amino acid therapy](#) as soon as possible.