

[7 Steps to a Better Night's Sleep For Improved Health and Fertility](#)

Sleep is one of the most important bodily functions. In fact is the only one that replaces some of the hormones we use during the day and enables us to process all the new information we come across daily.

The problem is that most people either do not get enough sleep or the quality is poor. The impact of this resonates negatively not only on your health but in every aspect of one's life because it affects your concentration, focus and moods during the day and in the long term it can even negatively impact reproductive balance. Some common warning signs of sleep deprivation include: poor motivation, feeling sleepy during the day, increased craving for sugar, nicotine, alcohol and coffee, irritability, depression, anxiety and headaches to name a few.

Necessary Quantity and Quality of Sleep

Too little sleep (4-6 hours) or too much sleep (over 9 hours) can have negative effects on one's health. The symptoms of both are similar and include: day time sleepiness, fatigue and lack of mental clarity.

So how much sleep do you need? According to The American National Sleep Foundation (and of course every individual is different) sleep requirement change with age and on average are as follows:

Infants/Babies* 0-2 months: 10.5-18.5 hours
 2-12 months: 14-15 hours

Toddlers/Children* 12-18 months: 13-15 hours
 18 months-3 years: 12-14 hours
 3-5 years: 11-13 hours
 5-12 years: 9-11 hours

Adolescents 8.5-9.5 hours

Adults/Older Persons On average: 7-9 hours

*Total time includes naps.

(Source: The American National Sleep Foundation)

Good quality sleep is characterized by feeling refreshed in the morning, ready for the day. To get the most benefits out of sleep, it is advisable to go to bed when the body's melatonin (hormone) secretion is at its highest around 9pm. Reproductive hormones also peak at that time which is a nature's way of pointing out the importance of going to bed early for optimum fertility.

How to Improve Your Sleep Quality

Here you will find some solutions for a better night's sleep. The more diligent you can be following these recommendations the faster and better your results will be.

To get you started, ensure you go to sleep and wake up at the same time everyday (including weekends) this will dramatically help to regulate your body's circadian rhythm to normalize and optimise your sleep patterns. The body needs consistency and as much darkness in the room as possible! Also be sure to go to bed when you are too sleepy to stay up, basically if you couldn't read a book (light or spiritual content preferred) for more than 2 pages without drifting off, it's bed time. Ideally at this stage it should take you less than 5 minutes to fall asleep in bed.

Other Important Self-Care Tips

1. Watch What You Eat

A healthy diet is essential to induce quality sleep. Basing your meals on non-starchy, low glycaemic vegetables and good quality proteins (e.g. organic chicken, fish, meat, eggs etc) throughout the day will certainly assist to maintain your blood sugar levels stable and prevent disruptive wake up patterns during the night. Also avoiding sugary and caffeine rich foods particularly in the afternoon and evening (such as chocolate for example) is essential!

2. Be Careful With What You Drink

Beverages such as juices (too sugary), coffee, tea, energy drinks and alcohol will most certainly negatively impact your sleep quality. For a lot of

people even one coffee early in the day is enough to throw their systems into chaos. If you must drink juices or caffeinated beverages do so in the morning. Alcohol is best avoided.

3. Regular Exercise is Essential

Exercise helps to reduce your stress and will definitely assist you in having a great night's sleep. However, studies show that the best time to exercise if you want to sleep well at night is in the morning. Exercising in the later part of the day (less than 6 hours before bed) can disrupt sleep. So schedule in your daily exercise for at least 40 minutes before work or during lunch time.

4. Nervous System Support

Nutrients and herbal medicines can have an amazingly nourishing and restorative effect on the body, being ideal when used to support good quality sleep. However, each individual has different requirements and an assessment of your needs, as well as what other supplements or medicines you are currently taking is really important before embarking on any new supplementation. Resolving depleted or deficient states in your body can make a world of difference to optimizing your sleep!

5. Balance Stress and Your Emotions

Tools such as meditation, visualizations, guided relaxation or recorded hypnotherapy sessions and emotional freedom technique are ideal tools for helping to reduce stress and balance your emotions. Seeking these out and regularly using them can mean the difference between great and terrible sleep.

6. Create Your Own Going to Bed Ritual

This is so important. Getting your body used to a pattern before bed, whether it be having a hot shower; brushing your teeth and putting on your 'comfy pajamas'; or reading a couple of pages of a certain book--what it is becomes less important than actually creating a before bed routine for yourself that is calming and soothing. Avoid watching TV or reading exciting novels at this time. The whole point is to unwind.

7. Your Physical Environment and Sleep Disorders

Having a peaceful, uncluttered, pleasant, cool (temperature) sleeping environment is essential for a good night's sleep. Try to use your bed for sleeping and love making only, definitely try never to eat or work in bed.

In addition for better sleep it is best to avoid electro-magnetic fields (EMFs) in your bedroom. These are created when electric devices are plugged into a power point in your bedroom and they can really disrupt your cellular and brain function as well as your sleep. For this reason TVs, clock radios, computers, gaming stations even electric blankets should not be in the bedroom at all (even if unplugged).

Finally, if you suspect you may have a sleeping disorder it is very important to get it checked. Symptoms, which can signal sleeping disorders include: snoring, restlessness at night with difficulty in breathing, arousals, sweating, insomnia, obstructive sleep apnea.

About the Author

Leading naturopath and natural fertility specialist Gabriela Rosa publishes the two celebrated '[Natural Fertility Booster](#)' and '[Natural Health Booster](#)' ezines with 1,000+ subscribers. If you're ready to optimise your health and fertility, get your FREE tips today!

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