



## 19 Ways To Get Great Sleep Plus 2 Bonus Tips!

I am so happy you have decided to watch this video. Are you excited to start getting better sleep? Would a good night's sleep really help you? I'm sure it would. I can guarantee if you follow these recommendations you will get better sleep. And sleep is so important for health.

It is hard to overestimate the importance of good sleep. Study after study demonstrates the importance of getting a good night's sleep. As we (and you) improve your metabolic pathways with lab testing, diet, exercise, removing inflammatory foods and specific supplementation, sleep will improve. The opposite is also true. As your sleep improves, your overall health will improve.

Sleep is so important because it helps set the circadian rhythms. Circadian rhythms are natural rhythms in your body. These rhythms are in almost every cell in your body. Your heart beats at a regular rhythm. You probably go to sleep and wake up about the same time. You should have bowel movements about the same time everyday. This is healthy and normal.

Circadian rhythms are set primarily by your sleep pattern. If it is disrupted, this is a major stress on the body. If you have ever had jet lag you know how bad it can make you feel. But worse than jet lag, chronic sleep problems will affect every system in your body.

Patients that come to our office don't come in and say sleep is their only problem. They will have a multitude of other problems that go with their sleep issues. Digestive problems, autoimmune problems and fatigue are just some of the conditions that go with chronic sleep problems.

It is very important from a functional medicine point of view and from a health point of view to get control of your sleep. Better sleep will help with:

- Fatigue
- Brain fog
- Hormone balance
- Inflammation
- Digestive health

Do not underestimate the value of sleep!

So let's look at some of the many ways we can improve sleep.

Below are several studies showing the importance of getting good sleep.

[Circadian rhythms, sleep, and metabolism \(Journal of Clinical Investigation\)](#)

[Circadian rhythms, sleep, and the menstrual cycle \(Sleep Medicine\)](#)

[Circadian Rhythms, Sleep, and Disorders of Aging \(Trends in Endocrinology Medicine\)](#)

[Sleep, circadian rhythms, and athletic performance \(Sleep Medicine\)](#)





## Training Your Brain To Sleep

One of the keys for good sleep is to train your brain that when bedtime comes it's time to go to sleep. This is how it works.

1. Relax! It takes time to regain a healthy sleep pattern. It usually doesn't happen overnight. Too much stress is the most common cause for sleep problems. Don't add more stress by worrying about not sleeping. Just do the best you can and relax. It takes time and there will be ups and downs. Try to deal with the stress you already have in your life. For many of us, bedtime might be our first opportunity of the day to be alone with our thoughts. This can be connected to waking in the middle of the night because, if we haven't had any processing time during the day, it's the first time we stop and just be. Managing stress and anxiety during waking hours and learning how to relax your body and mind are key to a good night's sleep – but ironically, fixating on getting your full eight hours can make it harder to achieve. You get this awful self-fulfilling prophecy that's quite hard to break,
2. Good sleep begins a few hours before you go to sleep. Screens such as TV's and computer screens emit blue light which can interrupt melatonin production. It is a good idea to turn off the screens an hour before bedtime. As an alternative, you can buy blue blocker glasses. They are available online.

3. Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day. This may be the most important step to regaining your sleep. Regular sleep and wake times reset your circadian clock. Eating at the same time everyday also helps set your circadian rhythms. You will see in the nutrition section, we would like you to finish eating by seven o'clock. No bedtime snacks. Eating before bedtime or in the middle of the night is not a healthy pattern.
  
4. When you go to bed, train your brain it's time to sleep. Bedrooms have become home cinemas, a playground with the kids, even a dining room. Your bed is for sleeping and sex. Nothing else. Don't watch TV in bed. Don't read in bed. Don't listen to the radio. If you can't fall asleep after about 20 minutes, get up and do something boring in another room with low light. Read a dull book you have no interest in. Watch a tv program you don't want to watch. Then try to go back to bed after 20 min or if you get tired again before 20 minutes is up. The idea is to train your brain when you hit the bed it's time to sleep. It's not time for reading or watching TV. Makes sense right? It is a misconception that we sleep through the night. Everyone wakes up multiple times through the night. That's part of normal sleep. The most important thing is how do you feel when you wake up?
  
5. No clock in the bedroom that you can see. People will often train their brain to wake up and look at the clock at the same time every night. If you need an alarm, hide the clock by turning it around so you can't see it.
  
6. No caffeine after lunch. (check with your coach to see if you can have caffeine)
  
7. No hard, strenuous exercise in the evening. Walking is fine.

8. Dim the lights about one half hour before bed. This increases melatonin levels and helps get you ready for sleep.
9. Do not nap during the day. Save your sleep for the evening.
10. Do you have to get up to go to the bathroom at night? If you do, turn on a dim light to see. Don't turn on a bright light. Cell phone lights work well. Don't drink a lot of water after your lunch. Drink most of your liquid between breakfast and lunch. As you will see in the nutrition section, drinking a lot of liquid can dilute stomach acid. Drink a little water with your meal as needed, but don't overdo it. The less water you drink the less likely you are to have to get up to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night.
11. One of the best ways to get a good night's sleep is to... we are all adults here right?... and yes, before you ask, there are studies to back this up but it's very seldom talked about... sex. Makes sense, right?
12. For sleeping, your room should be dark. Use heavy curtains if you need to.
13. Your room should be quiet. Wear ear plugs if there is sound you can't eliminate. Some people benefit from a white noise machine. Sometimes the cause of poor sleep is not you but who your sleeping with. If your partner snores, get him to fix that or one of you move to a different room. Pets or children sleeping with you can also interrupt sleep. Both pets and children can be trained to sleep on a bed next to yours. This can be a pallet of blankets or a dog bed.
14. Keep the room temperature on the cool side with the temperature below 70 degrees. Lowering the temperature in the room is very simple but it has helped many of our patients.

15. Meditation or prayer can be very helpful for calming your mind down. It needs to be practiced regularly though to be helpful. A great habit to get into is to wake up at the same time every morning. After you wake up, go to the bathroom, and then sit down and meditate for twenty minutes. It's a great habit to get into. Your mind is quieter in the morning than at any other part of the day and what a great way to start the day. I used to think I didn't have time for meditation in the morning. Now I realize I am much more productive without as much stress if I take the time to meditate first thing out of bed. See the mindset section for more information on meditation.
16. Continuing with the morning routine, try to get some direct sunlight before 10 am. This will also help to reset and firmly establish a normal circadian rhythm, so important for health.
17. Exercise also helps with sleep. Remember how good you slept as a kid after you wore yourself out by being active all day? The same thing applies to adults. Exercise earlier in the day, not in the evening if you are having problems sleeping.
18. Get a good mattress. We are often asked, what is the best mattress? Mattresses are a personal preference. Some people like a firm mattress, some people like a soft mattress. What is important is that it doesn't sag. Take off the sheets and covers and see if you can see any sagging. Don't forget to flip the mattress if it is a flippable mattress. Also turn it longways to distribute stress equally.
19. There are several good sleep apps you can put on your phone. These are helpful and interesting. They can give you valuable information about your sleep patterns. Our favorite is an app called Sleep Cycle. It has a free version.



## Melatonin

Melatonin is the hormone that helps you sleep. It is secreted by the pineal gland in the brain. In addition to sleep it helps to regulate the circadian rhythms. Are you seeing a pattern here! Melatonin's pattern or level is generally opposite to the level of cortisol, your stress hormone. At least it should be. Lab testing can see the balance between cortisol and melatonin. This is performed on the DUTCH test.

Melatonin is tested in Midwest Functional Medicine's DUTCH Test if you are having sleeping problems. This is invaluable for solving sleep problems.

Melatonin's level in the body is very low. Studies have shown that melatonin taken at 0.3 mg is the best dose. A lot of people are taking 10 or 20 mg. That is too much! If you are having nightmares after taking melatonin you are taking too much. Try to take the lowest dose possible. Most physician brands are around 5 mg.

If you are having trouble falling asleep, it may be low melatonin. If you fall asleep fine and wake up and then can't go back to sleep that is probably stress related.

Melatonin decreases with age.

Melatonin gets passed into breast milk. If you are breastfeeding and pumping to save for later, the time you pump your breast milk will affect the amount of melatonin in the milk. For instance, if you pump in the morning, this milk will be low in melatonin. If you give it to your baby in the evening it may affect sleep differently than if the milk was pumped in the evening. If your infant is having sleeping problems, consider giving them milk that was pumped at night in the evening, and milk that was pumped in the morning, in the morning.

In studies of samples of over the counter melatonin supplements, the dosage varied widely compared to what was on the bottle. Some had more and some had less than what was on the label. If sleep is an issue, make sure you get a physician's brand supplement.

Melatonin is made by the amino acid tryptophan. Tryptophan can be found in bananas. Tryptophan also makes serotonin which is a calming feel good hormone.

Controlling blood sugar is important in sleep hygiene. Eating too much sugar can cause insulin to spike. Sometimes this increase in insulin will overshoot and too much insulin causes the blood sugar to drop too far causing low blood sugar. Blood sugar control is important for a lot of health conditions. Controlling your blood sugar is one of the hallmarks of good health. Processed sugar wreaks havoc on your metabolic pathways. If there is one thing you can do for your health it is to cut out processed sugar. See our information about blood sugar control.





## Sleep Tape

This technique for sleeping better has been becoming popular lately. At first it sounds a little crazy, but if you try it you will see it's no big deal. I use sleep tape every night and now I wouldn't go without it.

A lot of people sleep with their mouths open. This causes problems. It dries out the mouth and can change the bacterial content of the mouth making you more susceptible to gum disease. It changes vagus nerve activity. It shifts the jaw forward and can cause crooked teeth. But it can also interfere with sleep as it makes you more likely to snore and wake yourself up.

So the technique to keep you from mouth breathing is simple. Tape your mouth shut! No you don't wrap duct tape all around your head! You simply put a small piece of tape over your lips. It doesn't even have to go all the way across. A band aid works well. Just use the sticky part and cut off the gauze part. You can purchase sleep tape online specifically made for this, but it's not necessary. At Walgreens you can buy medical tape that works well. Try it!

Please do not do this if you have a difficult time breathing out of your nose.

It takes a night or two or three to get used to it. There are times now when I am awake for 15 minutes before I realize I still have my tape on.

I find that during the day now I am not mouth breathing nearly as much. My mouth naturally stays shut more often. And believe me -- That's a good thing!

[Mouth Breathing And Some Of Its Consequences \(Review article\)](#)

[Rediscovering the importance of nasal breathing in sleep or, shut your mouth and save your sleep \(Study\)](#)

# The Bottom Line

Sleep is an indispensable part of health. There are many techniques to improve your sleep. Watch the video on the onepager. Take notes. Go through the list and pick out the ones that apply to you. Then start making meaningful changes to help you with your sleep. It's always exciting when someone takes control of their health and fights their way back to how they used to feel before their problems started. There are answers to your chronic sleep problems. The value of getting a good night's sleep is often underestimated.

You can develop over time better sleep patterns to improve your overall health. Start tonight!

