

# **Sleep Well**

## **A Natural Remedy Guide for Healthful Sleep**

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## Introduction

Everyone experiences trouble sleeping once in a while. While this may be inconvenient, it's often temporary. When occasional sleepless nights turn into a regular occurrence of many nights in a row with interrupted sleep, you might have a sleeping problem.

When you don't get enough sleep for an extended period of time your tiredness impacts every part of your life. Physically, you might notice a decrease in your productivity and daily activities. Emotionally, you may experience relationship problems or a change in your personality. Mentally, a chronic sleep problem can create stress and anxiety.

There are three categories of sleep deprivation and insomnia. The first stage, called "initial" insomnia, is when you first realize you're having difficulty achieving a sleep state and occurs when it takes longer than a half an hour to fall asleep. "Middle" insomnia is when you have difficulty staying asleep. Once awakened, you stay awake through the wee hours of the morning. The most severe level of insomnia is "late" or "terminal" insomnia. This is when you wake up early in the morning and stay awake after sleeping less than 6 hours.

There are a variety of reasons that you may be having trouble sleeping. If your insomnia is due to a medical condition, your doctor will be able to provide you with suggestions and appropriate medical attention. If it's determined that your sleep problem is due to a medical condition, the condition will be treated with the intention that this will in turn treat the insomnia.

On the other hand, if your sleep difficulties are occurring because you are stuck in a cycle of sleepless nights, or your insomnia is due to your inability to reach a state of inner peace needed to achieve sleep, this book is for you. Here you'll find healthy options to try before taking potentially harmful and habit forming prescription sleep aids.

In this book you'll learn about:

- Preparing the perfect sleep environment
- Relaxation techniques
- The role of exercise and diet in your sleep health
- How to quiet your mind to promote good sleep
- Beneficial natural supplements

When following the tips in this book, you will have all of the tools needed to stop tossing and turning at night and start enjoying a full night's sleep, naturally. You will wake up feeling rejuvenated and attentive, instead of exhausted and restless. Prepare yourself drift off to dreamland naturally!

## Chapter 1

### Behavioral Changes for Healthy Sleep Habits

#### *Habits at Bedtime*

It is essential that your brain has consistency by creating a bedtime schedule so that your body can learn how to fall asleep without medication. Create a sleep strategy to determine the best routine, and plan to follow the routine for one to two weeks before making any alterations.

Your sleep strategy should include:

- A regular bedtime
- A consistent wake time
- A record of any natural supplements you have tried
- Routine activities that are not stimulating such as brushing your teeth or reading

Moving through a regular bedtime process will signal to your brain that it's time to go to sleep. The desired end result of having a sleep strategy is regular sleep that's restful and refreshing.

Plan to get 7-8 hours of sleep nightly, and don't allow yourself to oversleep. If you wake up the same time every day you'll establish a routine. Avoid naps during the day because your body will be confused, and it will interrupt your sleep pattern. You can't bank extra hours of sleep, and trying to sleep later in the morning to make up for sleep lost overnight will leave you feeling tired.

Every person has different sleep habits, so be patient while you work through the process of finding the sleep plan that works best for you.

## *Sleep Environment*

In addition to a regular bedtime schedule, it is important to make your bedroom a place that is conducive to sleep. The more comfortable and relaxing your sleep space is, the better your chances for falling asleep and staying asleep. Consider these tips when creating your relaxing sleep atmosphere:

- Get rid of all annoyances and interruptions.
- Control the room temperature; cooler air (between 65 and 70 degrees F) is typically more comfortable for sleep, however, set the temperature to your preference.
- Allow for room ventilation, if possible. Crack a window slightly to allow for air flow. The circulating fresh air will help you breathe deeply, and provide oxygen that is essential for good sleep.
- Use ear plugs if there are noises outside the bedroom. There are many types of plugs that are specifically for sleeping, so if at first you don't find the perfect pair, try another.
- Mask noises with a white noise machine if you decide to not wear earplugs. Machines are designed specifically for this purpose, or you can use a fan or air conditioner to provide the background noise. This will hide background sounds such as traffic or a barking dog.
- Try using a CD player to play soothing background music.
- Your *circadian rhythm*, your body's internal clock, relies on light and dark patterns to determine when to signal your body to fall asleep. Keep your room as dark as possible to help your body settle into a sleep state. Use mini-blinds and thick curtains to block light from windows. Try wearing an eye mask to block any remaining light.
- Having a clock by your bedside might be adding to your sleep problem. If you are watching the clock all night long, face it toward the wall so that

you can't see the time. Constantly looking at the clock only makes you think about sleep, and lack of sleep, which continues the cycle of sleeplessness.

- Consider a room humidifier for winter months when the air is dry.
- Use your room only for sleeping. Remove the TV, computer, stereo. Your mind should associate your bedroom only with sleep.
- Wear the most comfortable clothing you own. Non-constrictive clothing won't wake you in the middle of the night.

As you can see here, there are many different tips to try to help you sleep better. Each individual has their own unique combination of elements that make up their perfect sleep environment. If one suggestion doesn't work for you, make note and try another until you find out what works best for you.

### ***Sleep Equipment***

Also important to the sleep environment is the equipment used when sleeping. Sleep equipment includes the pillow, bedding, mattress, and sleep clothes.

Your mattress should be smooth and firm so that your back is well-supported and your body is comfortable when lying down. Make sure the mattress is supported completely by the bed frame to avoid sagging.

The mattress should also be appropriately sized for your body. Make sure you have a big enough bed so that you have enough space. If you have a single or double bed, consider buying a larger queen or king sized mattress.

Use whatever style and type of pillow you find most comfortable. It doesn't matter what it's made of as long as it provides you with neck and head support.

The sheets and blankets should be clean and pressed. If you do not like feeling tucked in, loosen the sheets so that your feet can move around freely.

To find the right temperature for you, experiment with different blankets of a variety of weights and materials. Since a cool room is most conducive to sleep, keep the lower temperature in mind when selecting bedding.

Find a sleep position that is comfortable for you and lay in that position so that your body knows it's time for sleep. Whether it is lying on your back, on your side, or on your stomach, your favorite position will help you instantly get relaxed.



## Chapter 2

### Self-Help Sleep Techniques

#### *Color Therapy*

Using color therapy, or “chromatherapy”, is a unique way to treat a variety of ailments, including, but not limited to, sleep problems. Chromatherapy involves being exposed to color in various ways. Being shown colored lights, visualizing and meditating on a color, being massaged with colored oils, and wearing specific colors can help treat both physically and emotionally caused sleep problems.

Chromatherapy has a long history. Ancient Indian beliefs practiced chromatherapy in Ayurvedic medicine, where it was believed that colors corresponded to parts of the body, emotions and spiritual aspects of life. They believed that each of the *charkas*, areas of energy in the body, linked to a color.

Ancient Egyptians used chromatherapy by breaking up the sunlight with specially created lenses. They built solariums where they practiced chromatherapy.

Chromatherapy as we know it was developed in the late 1600’s when scientist Sir Isaac Newton proved that light is a mixture of color from the full range of color we can see.

Modern-day color therapy came about when Dr. Edwin D. Babbitt penned his Principles of Light and Color. In this publication he outlined how color therapy could be used to treat a variety of maladies, include sleep difficulties.

The 1940’s were a time of experimentation with color therapy. During this time, Russian scientist S.V. Krakov experimented with chromatherapy and determined that when he separated light spectrum’s wavelengths it had an impact on the nervous system. For example, he found that red light increased blood pressure and impacted the adrenal glands. White light and blue light were found to be

relaxing. This groundbreaking information is still used today by color therapy practitioners.

How does it color therapy work? Color is a part of what makes up light, and light has many different energy waves. When light enters the retina of the eye, it touches the photoreceptor cells in the eye. The photoreceptors turn the light into electrical impulses, which signal the brain to release hormones. By controlling the release of hormones, chromatherapy can be used to treat insomnia and other sleep-related difficulties.

In a time when alternative medicine is becoming more popular, Chromatherapy is actively being used by the medical community to treat disorders such as depression and seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

Some types of color therapy should only be practiced by trained professionals. However, there are color therapy techniques that can be practiced safely at home.

To try chromatherapy on your own, follow these tips. Select hues to wear based on your recommended color. When eating, choose foods that are a particular color. Spend time visualizing a recommended color.

Be aware of the following potential concerns:

- Never replace traditional care with chromatherapy for severe insomnia.
- Epileptics should avoid looking directly at any type of flashing lights.
- When using colored lights, do not look directly into the light. Receive colored light therapy indirectly by looking at an object that is lit by the colored light.
- If you are on prescription medication, check the label for a light sensitivity side effect. Exposure to bright light might cause a problem.

## *Physical Activity*

Getting exercise during the day is an important factor in how well you sleep at night. If you are physically active during the day, your body will be able to relax and fall asleep easier. Exercise helps your body deal with daily stress and anxiety. It impacts the chemicals in your brain, and how much you exercise is directly linked to your physical and emotional health. Regular exercise will help you fall asleep and maintain a sleep state because your sleep cycles become more consistent and the transition between them becomes more seamless. Try to work exercise into your life daily to avoid sleeplessness.

When getting physical activity, plan to exercise more than 3-4 hours before bedtime. For the best sleep benefit, be physically active in the late afternoon or early evening.

Try to be physically active for at least 20-30 minutes a day, 3-4 times per week. Aerobic activities usually work best to remedy insomnia, and activities can range from an easy walk to a rigorous run. By making your heart rate go up, improving your lung capacity, and adding oxygen into your blood, your body will be in better health and you'll be on your way to naturally correcting your sleep problem.

In addition to aerobic exercise, there are other types of physical activity you can do to fight sleeplessness. Consider yoga or Tai Chi. Yoga affects the brain and core muscles and improves blood circulation. Using yogic breathing techniques will help you relax and live with less stress. Tai Chi incorporates breathing with body movements in a slow-moving style that is perfect for individuals with joint pain or other issues that keep you from high-impact exercise.

If adding 30 minutes of exercise into your daily schedule is too tough, try adding small blocks of physical activity. Making small changes, like taking the stairs instead of the elevator, or purposely parking further away from your destination will help you live a healthy, energetic life.

## Relaxation through Meditation

It only stands to reason that the more relaxed you are the more likely you are to fall asleep and maintain a satisfactory sleep state. It's essential to quiet your mind in order to fall asleep quickly. By using meditation you can stop thinking, worrying, or what ever else is going through your head.

There are several different meditation and visualization methods that will help you relax. Try one of these meditation styles:

1. **Focal point method.** Select a focal point, whether it is a *mantra*, visual point, or even your own breathing. A mantra is a word or phrase that is repeated either in your mind or out loud to help you focus on meditating. The use of a mantra or other focal point will help keep you on track and keep your mind from wandering. You need to be disciplined to practice this method of meditation, because thoughts will come into your head and you will be tempted to think about other things. This method will become easier the more you practice it.
2. **Breathing-focused meditation.** Find a comfortable, quiet space and sit on the floor, using a cushion if so desired. Sitting with your hands in your lap, calm your body and close your eyes. Breathe in and out through your nose. Make an effort to concentrate on your breathing, counting each breath in and out until you reach ten. Continue counting in groups of ten until you begin to feel relaxed. Empty your mind of everything and concentrate only on counting as you inhale and exhale. If thoughts enter your mind, acknowledge that they are there and let them go, again focusing on your breath. When you have finished meditating, become aware of your body once more and stretch before getting up.
3. **Guided imagery.** This method combines visualization with meditation and hypnosis. This type of meditation is guided, and you are led to visualize relaxation, which helps you feel relaxed. Find a place that is quiet and dimly lit. Using a tape or CD player, play a pre-recorded imagery

recording. Guided imagery usually starts with deep breathing and other deep breathing exercises. When you relax, your imagination comes alive and the recording will guide you through a variety of scenes, using your imagination to help you find peacefulness and relaxation. Common guided imagery scenarios include beach side strolls, mountain hikes, or nature walks through the forest. At the end of your guided imagery session you should feel calm and relaxed.

The aforementioned meditation methods are only a sampling of the wide array of choices available. Experiment with these, and research others, to find one that helps you fight insomnia.

### *Simple Respiration: Breathing and Relaxing*

Breathing is the simplest and easiest way to find complete relaxation and stress reduction. The more deeply you breathe, the more serene you will become. These relaxation tips will help your body wind down and get ready for sleep.

When you first get into bed:

Lie down and breathe deeply through your nose. Imagine the air moving into your stomach. On your next inhale, breathe in for four counts. Exhale slowly through your pursed lips, while counting to eight. You will feel the tension leave your body with every exhale. Repeat this technique six to ten times for immediate relaxation. Practice deep breathing daily to develop a healthy habit of regular relaxation. Calming your mind will help you fall asleep.

Before going to bed try this relaxation technique:

Lie down with your back to the floor and your arms at your side, palms facing upward. Your feet should be comfortably apart. With your eyes closed, mentally concentrate on each part of your body, tensing then releasing each group of

muscles. Starting at the top of your head, release tension as you move slowly down your body. Feel your forehead, eyes and mouth. Work through your shoulders, neck and back. Move down to your toes, then bask in the relaxed state you have achieved. Focus on your breathing, making sure breath is coming from your stomach. Breathe deeply and slowly, letting go of all your concerns and stress. When your body knows it's okay to let go of your worries and stressors, you'll be able to go to sleep naturally.

There are many other techniques for breathing and relaxation. Through your own experimentation and practice you can find one that works well for you.

### ***Music and Sounds for Sleep Induction***

Using noise as a tool to help fall asleep has been done since the beginning of time. The earliest form of this technique is the lullaby, which has successfully soothed even the most colicky baby. There are many CDs and sound devices on the market today that are designed to have the same effect as a mother singing or humming a child to sleep. Here are a few suggestions:

- Relaxing classical music CDs or tapes are a wonderful way to relax and put your mind at ease. Look for “Baroque Music” by Mozart, “Lullaby” by Brahms, and “Waltzes” by Strauss. This is only a small sampling of the many, selections available.
- Try something soothing and modern. Ambient Electronica, which is also called “downtempo” and “chillout”, is a great way to unwind. Gently mixing an ongoing techno-style beat, a taste of house-style music for irregular progressions, and unique rhythms, Ambient Electronica has soft melodies and calming sound effects. A few good choices to try are Aphex Twin, Brian Eno, The Orb, and Future Sound of London.
- When trying New Age/Tribal music there are many recordings to choose from. The sound of this style is similar to Ambient Electronica, but unique

non-electronic instruments like the harpsichord, chimes, bells, and didgeridoos are used. The beat is often similar to that of a drum circle and sometimes involves guttural throat sounds and chants.

- If you'd prefer to stay away from music, there is always non-musical sound effect CDs or tapes. These often feature babbling brooks, waves, rain, whale songs, waterfalls, and other sounds found in nature. If you are a city dweller that is having trouble sleeping because it is too quiet, there are recordings of city noises such as fire engines, traffic, and airplanes just for you.
- Sound machines are widely available and can be found at many different price points. Usually about the size of an alarm clock, they typically come with a selection of sounds to pick from. You can select how the recordings play, either as an ongoing loop or for a preset length of time. Some sound machines are even built into alarm clocks, and can be used to gently awaken you. When deciding which style of unit to purchase, keep in mind that the units that play synthesized sounds are best, because they most closely imitate the natural sound. The second choice is a sound device that only plays recorded samples.

The style of music that works best depends entirely on the individual. Some people respond better to non-linear music, while others find it easier to drift off to sleep with soothing percussion in the background. Some prefer random beats and tempo, others like a constant pattern of music. Try several different types to find the style that you prefer.

An interesting aside, music's relationship with sleep is the current focus of a study being conducted by the University of Toronto's psychiatry department and Toronto Western Hospital. In their sleep clinic, they are investigating "brain music". Brain music is EEG readings, converted to music via a computer program designed to compose customized music based on the EEG readings. Each sleeper's brain waves are watched and studied. The scientists determine

which rhythmic and tonal sounds the individual is most responsive to and they input it into a computer. A computer program is used to develop a personalized “soundtrack” of music that will invoke the same brain wave patterns when the person is trying to fall asleep later. There is evidence that shows this personalized method of music therapy is highly effective. Obviously researchers are very interested in pursuing this method of relaxation since it is typically effective and does not involve possibly habit forming medication.

### *Reducing Your Evening Stimulation*

The best nighttime routine is one that leaves you feeling relaxed and ready to go to bed. If you are experiencing trouble falling asleep, it may be beneficial to avoid external stimulations for an hour or so before bedtime. Stimulation, such as watching television, keeps your mind active and alert. If you find it difficult to give up television before bed, try to select shows that are calming rather than aggressive, action-packed programs.

When reducing your evening stimulation to promote healthy sleep habits, try these tips:

- Keep your bedroom television-free. This will help your mind and body associate the bedroom with sleeping only.
- Don’t exercise up to three hours prior to bedtime. Remember that exercise wakes up your body, and unless physical activity is done well before you plan to go to bed, it will work against you when trying to sleep.
- Plan to unwind when returning home from being out. If you jump directly into bed, your mind and body might not have sufficient time to decompress and slip into your evening routine.
- Try reading. Non-technical reading might help make you tired. Avoid work-related or overly complicated material.



- Avoid falling asleep without turning off the light. This will wake you up in the night and disturb your sleep cycles, as well as your bedtime routine.

The goal is to define the fine line between stimulation and relaxation when deciding how to unwind. Being able to easily relax at night will be paramount to your success in falling asleep naturally.

### Stay Away from Internal Stimulants

While there are many external stimulants in your environment, there are also stimulants that affect your body from the inside. Impacting the way you feel, think, and relax, these products contain caffeine, sugar, and chemicals. While you don't need to completely remove these items from your diet, you do need to pay attention and be sure not to ingest them after dinnertime to avoid difficulty falling asleep.

- **Caffeinated beverages.** Caffeine wakes up your body and mind by raising your heart rate. Since it has this effect, it is considered a stimulant. Coffee, colas, teas, and chocolate beverages contain caffeine. Have your last caffeinated beverage at least 3-4 hours prior to bedtime to avoid having difficulty sleeping.
- **Chocolate.** Chocolate has caffeine and sugar, both of which are stimulants that will keep you from having a restful night's sleep. Do not have chocolate for 2-3 hours prior to bedtime.
- **Alcohol.** While alcoholic beverages might make you feel tired and help you fall asleep, the sleep is typically not restful. For example, you might find yourself waking up in the middle of the night feeling dehydrated, then have trouble falling back to sleep. As with any other medication that can become addictive, you do not want to create a nightly dependency on alcohol to fall asleep at night.

- **Smoking.** Tobacco contains nicotine which is a stimulant. Your body's nicotine dependency can cause your body to wake when the level of nicotine in your blood becomes low. Try to not to smoke in the hours before bedtime.

<b>Caffeine in Common Beverages and Drugs</b>	
<b>Beverages</b>	
Brewed coffee, drip method, 5 oz cup	60-180 mg caffeine
Instant coffee, 5 oz. cup	30-120 mg caffeine
Decaffeinated coffee, 5 oz. cup	1-5 mg caffeine
Brewed tea, 5 oz. cup	60-180 mg caffeine
Instant tea, 5 oz. cup	25-50 mg caffeine
Iced Tea, 12 oz. cup	67-76 mg caffeine
Cola, 12 oz. cup	36-47 mg caffeine
<b>Chocolate</b>	
Dark/semisweet, 1 oz.	5-35 mg caffeine
<b>Non-prescription Drugs</b>	
Dexatrim	200 mg caffeine
No Doz	100 mg caffeine
Excedrin	65 mg caffeine

## Your Diet Matters

Your diet impacts your ability to fall asleep and maintain sleep at night. By eating a healthy diet, low in processed foods, sugar, fat, and preservatives, you may find that you can stop the cycle of insomnia and improve your overall health.

Consider these guidelines for a healthy sleep diet:

- Follow the recommended daily guidelines for fruits and vegetables.
- Increase the complex carbohydrates in your diet.
- Eat protein that is low in fat, and consider meat substitutes like tofu or veggie burgers.
- Avoid spicy and heavy foods.
- If you need a snack before bed, make it low in fat and sugar.
- Eat your last meal four or more hours before bedtime.
- Try not to overeat at your nighttime meal because you might feel drowsy immediately after eating. Alternatively, be sure to eat enough so that you are not ravenous at bedtime.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day. A well hydrated body won't wake up in the night because of dehydration. Drink eight glasses, equivalent to 2 liters of water per day.

Watch yourself for food allergies that might be subtly causing you sleep disturbances. Common food allergies that might affect your sleep patterns are wheat, dairy products, corn and chocolate.

A well-balanced, wholesome diet will help you be a healthier person overall. General health is a huge factor in your ability to fall asleep naturally. If your daily intake of food is healthy, your body and mind will be healthy and well-nourished, helping you sleep deeply without waking in the night.

## Get Rid of Anxiety and Worry

Are you someone whose mind is filled with thoughts of your family, your finances, your job and the future, when you are trying to fall asleep? Do you find it hard to stop thinking and /or worrying about things long enough to drift off? If your mind is busy at bedtime, it can lead to constant tossing and turning and insomnia.

If you worry about situations in life, there are a few techniques you can use to help put the worry out of your mind, and fall asleep. First, realize that now is the time to sleep, and the situations and events that are causing you stress will be there tomorrow. Try making a “Worry Notebook.” In a notebook designated for this purpose, create a list of what’s causing you stress and anxiety before you go to bed. Then go through the list and identify which items can be dealt with tomorrow. The list of items on your list for tomorrow then becomes your to-do list for the next day. This will help you feel more in control and positive about situation.

In separate section of your notebook, create a list of things that you worry about but are out of your control. Reconfirm to yourself that you have no power to change these things.

When you have finished your lists, put away the notebook and remind yourself that you have put these things out of your mind, and onto paper, and will not think about them again until tomorrow. If you find yourself thinking about these stressors during the night, firmly remind yourself that you have put away the notebook until the morning and now is sleep time.

Another idea for getting rid of your worry and anxiety is to write in a diary daily. Along with a record of your day, be sure to include what bothers you and causes you stress. The main point of this exercise is to put your feelings on paper, thus releasing you from thinking and worrying about them at night.

For both of these techniques, the act of writing down your anxiety and worry, gives you permission to rest at night and handle your feelings the next day.

In addition to these techniques, consider using the relaxation tips detailed in the previous chapter. Yoga and soft music or relaxing sounds may help to clear your mind. Consider trying light reading to keep your mind off worrisome thoughts. If you teach your mind to relax, you will find it easier to achieve a night of restful sleep.

### **Bath time**

A soothing warm bath an hour or so before bedtime will relax you and help you feel sleepy. Do not try to go to sleep immediately following the bath because warm water has a stimulating effect on your body by raising your body temperature. After the bath, you will probably find yourself getting drowsy as your body temperature returns to normal.

How does a warm bath help you sleep better? The warm water will relax your major muscle groups, help your circulatory system, and raise your body temperature. When your core temperature returns to normal about an hour after the bath, you'll still feel relaxed and comfortable and your body will be ready for sleep.

Creating a peaceful bath time experience is easy and enjoyable. To make a soothing bath environment, light candles and use dim lighting in the bathroom. Experiment with scented oils or incense. Put on some light, tranquil music, and enjoy the mellow environment.

Another way to make your bath special is to add herbs to the water. Make a blended herb to take advantage of the herb's relaxing qualities. Put the sachet in the tub when it's filling, and hold it under the hot water while it steeps. Unwind in the tub while enjoying the herbal scents. A few comforting herbs to try are lavender, chamomile, mint, passion flower, and lime flower.

There are many aromatic oils on the market that are created to induce relaxation. About 4-5 drops of the essential oil is added to the bath after the tub is filled.

When deciding on an essential oil to use, try rose, chamomile, lavender, hops, ylang-ylang, vetiver, or neroli for a calming bath.

Bath powder is a third choice of enhancements that can be added to your bath. This recipe for bath powder should be added to the water while you are filling the tub.

***Milk & Honey Bath Powder***

½ cup honey

3 cups powdered milk

Lavender buds

**Preparation**

Mix all ingredients well in a large bowl. Add several tablespoons of the milk bath to warm water in the tub. Store any remaining mixture in a sealed container.

Bath time is a great way to encourage relaxation and drowsiness. Experiment with various herbs and oils to find the ones that work best for you.

## Chapter 3

### Herbal Remedies and Supplements

#### Your Body's Natural Hormones

Melatonin (chemically named *5-methoxy-N-acetyltryptamine*) is a naturally occurring hormone in humans. The *pineal gland*, a tiny organ at the center of our brains, secretes melatonin at night to help our bodies maintain a sleep schedule.

The body's internal clock that tells us when to sleep and when to wake up is the body's circadian rhythm. This rhythm is regulated by melatonin.

Darkness encourages the pineal gland to release melatonin, while light represses the release of melatonin. Researchers have found that the pineal gland's release of, and the production of, melatonin decreases as we get older. This explains why young people typically have less sleep-related problems than older people.

Scientists have synthesized naturally occurring melatonin, and it is now available over-the-counter as a supplement. No prescription is needed, and the supplement is available in drug and health food stores in the United States.

Melatonin is not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or any other government agency. Since it is naturally occurring in some foods, the U.S. Dietary Supplement & Education Act of 1994 permits it to be available as a dietary supplement.

Melatonin has proven to be successful when used to treat sleep problems. Two of the sleep situations most helped by melatonin supplementation are insomnia related to jet-lag and delayed sleep-phase disorders.

How much melatonin should you take? Each individual should begin with a small amount of melatonin (about 1 mg), and increase their dosage if needed. Melatonin comes in pill form and range most commonly from 1 mg to 3 mg.

When should you take melatonin? For maximum effectiveness, take melatonin about a half an hour prior to bed time. If you regularly sleep during the nighttime, you should not take melatonin during the day because it can impact your circadian rhythm. The opposite is true if you sleep during the day and work at night. If you want to prevent jet lag when traveling across many time zones, take a dose prior to flying and a second dose 30 minutes before going to bed.

As with any supplement, there are several issues to consider. Although melatonin has been used for a long time without problems or side effects, it is not FDA-approved, and is unregulated by any regulatory agency. Anything you ingest that is not FDA-approved does not have a seal of approval regarding the supplement's safety or purity, and the effectiveness of the product cannot be guaranteed. Another concern is the lack of study and information regarding interactions with other medicines.

Consult a doctor before taking melatonin if you have diabetes, a depressive disorder, an auto-immune disease, epilepsy, lymphoproliferative disorder, leukemia, or are taking an MAO inhibitor. This product should be used by adults only and is not for use by children, teens, or pregnant or breast-feeding women.

### **The Benefits of Chamomile**

*Matricaria camomilla*, commonly called "Chamomile", is native to southern and central Europe. This flowering plant is now widely grown in the United States, Argentina, Australia, Egypt and northern Africa. The leaves and flowers are dried and used as tea, either in teabags or in loose tea form.

For centuries, chamomile has been used as a sleep-promoting supplement. One of the benefits of using chamomile as a sleep aid is that it does not need to be taken over a long period of time to be effective. Chamomile can be used to treat anxiety and insomnia on the spot.



There are a few ways to use chamomile. It can be placed in a sachet under the pillow. Try brewing a tea and drink it 30-45 minutes prior to going to sleep. Chamomile is most effective in treating transient (or mild) insomnia.

The naturally occurring chemical in chamomile that promotes drowsiness and encourages sleep is called *chrysin*. Chrysin is also found in passion flower (*Passiflora incarnates*), which is another herbal sleep aid and anxiety reducer.

If you find your insomnia is due to congestion and/or allergies, chamomile works as anti-histamine to reduce swelling from allergies and help you sleep better. However, chamomile can create a similar allergic reaction to that of ragweed and other plants in the same family like aster or chrysanthemum. Avoid taking chamomile if you have these allergies.

#### ***Chamomile Tea Recipe*** (one serving)

1 cup water

1 teaspoon dried chamomile flowers

lemon juice

honey

#### **Preparation**

Add the chamomile to boiling water either using a tea infuser or directly into the water. Cover and boil for 35-40 seconds. Remove the saucepan from the heat and let the tea steep for one minute. If using loose tea, remove with a strainer. Serve with honey and a twist of lemon. For an added calming effect, use a few leaves of Lemon Balm, also called *Melissa officinalis*, instead of the lemon juice.

### ***The Soothing Properties of Lavender***

Lavender originated in the western Mediterranean and Arabians are believed to have been the first to domesticate the flowering shrubbery. The Romans later

spread the growing and cultivation of the plant across Europe. The Pilgrims brought lavender to America. Lavender was also one of the first plants brought to Australia in the 1800's.

Many herb gardens contain garden grown or container grown lavender. Lavender is grown in somewhat alkaline soil, in a sunny location with good drainage.

Lavender's essential oils act as a tranquilizer to calm the central nervous system, making it highly effective as an herbal remedy for insomnia. The dried flowers and leaves can be brewed and drunk in a tea, or the plant's essential oils can be extracted from the plant. Essential oils can be applied to the skin as a muscle relaxant, or the scent can be inhaled as used in aromatherapy. Since the feet are known as an area of the body that quickly absorbs topically applied products, massaging lavender oil into the feet will have a calming effect. The essential oil can be vaporized in a vaporizer or added to a warm bath and inhaled. You can also create a sachet of the dried leaves and flowers, sprinkle with essential lavender oil, and slip it under your pillow.

Some people who apply lavender topically have experienced an allergic reaction when the oil contacts the skin. Always conduct an allergy test on a small patch of skin to test for sensitivity prior to using a full application.

It's also important to note that not all lavender species have the same calming effects. Spanish lavender, for example, is used to invigorate and wake up the body.

***Lavender & Mint Tea*** (one serving)

1 teaspoon fresh lavender flowers (or ½ teaspoon dried)

1 ½ - 2 tablespoons fresh mint leaves (or 2 teaspoons dried)

1 cup water

Other herbs like rosemary, lemon balm or lemon verbena, or rose geranium for added flavor

### **Preparation**

Using a teapot, mix the lavender and mint. You can use a tea infuser or simply add the loose leaves and strain it later. Add boiling water and let it steep for five minutes.

### ***Handmade Lavender Sachet***

Dried or fresh lavender

Lavender oil

A cloth or handkerchief

1 large needle to fit a ribbon, 1 regular sized needle

Thread, ¼" wide ribbon

### **Preparation**

1. Prepare your handkerchief by folding in half, then folding in half a second time, creating a pouch. If you prefer a crisp look, iron the edges.
2. Using the threaded needle, sew three of the four sides.
3. Fill the pouch with lavender through the unsown side. Use enough of the lavender to fill the pouch, but don't overstuff it. The final product will resemble a bean bag. Add approximately 8-10 drops of essential oil to the dried lavender.
4. With the larger needle threaded with ribbon, loosely sew the open side to keep all of the sachet contents inside.
5. When sealed, knot the ribbon and enjoy your homemade sachet!

### ***The Medicinal Use of Valerian Root***

*Valeriana officinalis*, otherwise known as “Valerian Root”, is considered to be one of the most effective natural remedies available for insomnia. To see the benefits of valerian root, the herb must be taken regularly over a period of about one month to see results. After taking valerian root for about a month, you will find that it encourages relaxation and deep sleep.

Valerian root flowers late in the spring, and it is typically found in pastures and heath land in the wild. The rhizomes and roots are the parts of the plant that are used for most herbal remedies. Most often the valerian root is collected in September and dried to make widely available herbal products.

At Switzerland’s Nestle Research Laboratories, researchers P.D. Leatherwood, Ph.D., and F. Chauffard, Ph.D., determined that the efficacious dose of valerian as a sleep aid is 450 mg. Higher doses cause grogginess without being more effective. Leatherwood also found in a separate study that valerian root was not only effective as a relaxant, but also improved the quality of sleep.

It is understood that valerian root’s impact on the body is similar to that of benzodiazepine, an ingredient in Valium™. One of the advantages of valerian root over other sedatives is that there is not next day cloudiness or grogginess. It has been said that Valium’s name came from valerian root, but it’s important to note that they are chemically completely different and should not be considered to be related.

Prescribed sleep aids can be toxic, however, valerian root is non-toxic and does not hinder the ability to drive nor does it negatively interact with alcohol. Valerian root is used to provide relief from anxiety disorders, and acts as a sedative to encourage restful sleep.

Herbalists sometime recommend taking fresh valerian root over the extract because of the possibility of a delayed stimulant effect on some people. Depending on your body chemistry, valerian root sometimes causes an initial sedative effect, then several hours later provides an energy surge, obviously not

a desirable trait when taken as a sleep aid. The fresh valerian root is less likely cause a delayed stimulant effect.

## ***A World of Other Herbs***

### Kava

*Piper methysticum*, also called “Kava”, is found mainly in Samoa and Tonga in western Polynesia, as well as most of Melanesia and in Micronesia. This shrub is part of the pepper family (Piperaceae).

Kava is widely available in health food stores and comes in several forms. It’s used as an on-the-spot treatment for anxiety. Most popular is the kava extract, which is available in a convenient spray that can be kept handy for a quick spritz under the tongue when in need of immediate anxiety relief. Raw kava is also available, but it is recommended to purchase the high grade lateral root for best results.

Professional herbalists say that kava’s effective daily dose is between 70 and 200 mg of *kavalactones*. Kavalactones are major active components of kava that have the psychoactive impact. The best dose to encourage a restful night’s sleep is 150-200 mg, taken about 20-30 minutes before going to sleep.

### Lemon Balm

*Melissa officianalis*, commonly known as “Lemon Balm”, has an enjoyable lemon flavor, and is often used in a relaxing and tasty tea.

Found mainly in northern Africa and southern Europe, this perennial herb is part of the mint family. It can be grown in an herb garden with well-drained soil, and lemon balm does well in sandy soil with full sun.

Try a lemon balm tea by adding 2 teaspoons dried lemon balm to 1 cup of boiling water. Brew the tea for 10 minutes and drink immediately before bedtime.

### Passion Flower

*Passiflora incarnate*, also known as “passion flower”, is often used as a relaxant, and is taken to calm the muscles and digestive system, and aid in digestion. It is taken in tea form.

Passion flower grows in the southern US and Latin America, and is also known by its folk names Passion Vine and Maypops. Throughout history passion flower has been used as a substitute for tobacco and as a tranquilizer.

Some herbalists consider passion flower to be the best herbal remedy for treating *intransigent insomnia*. Passion flower is not addictive and provides relief from sleeplessness. There are no known side effects, and passion flower can be used by the elderly and children without concern.

Dried passion flower makes a highly effective tea. To brew passion flower tea, steep 1 teaspoon of dried herb in one cup of boiling water for 15 minutes. Drink tea 30 minutes before bed time.

### California Poppy

*Eschscholtzia californica*, commonly called “California poppy” contains *protopine*. Protopine has a similar effect as morphine on the brain. The California poppy does not have the same narcotic as its sister the Opium poppy, although there is a resemblance in its structure. California poppy is not addictive. Scientists have not actively studied the effects of California poppy so there are no guidelines for dosage.

## Hops

*Humulus lupulus*, also known as “hops”, are the main flavoring ingredient in beer. Hops are the *strobiles*, or fruit, of the plant. The hops plant is a member of the cannibis family. Hops are usually used in conjunction with other herbs when being used for its sedative qualities, although it can be effectively used on its own as well. Hops come as dried stobiles, capsules, and tablets, and are commonly used as a relaxing tea or as a sachet placed underneath the pillow.

To make a sachet, follow the previously given lavender sachet instructions, only replace the lavender with a mixture of ¼ cup hop stobiles, 1/8 cup chamomile flowers, and 1/8 cup lavender. Sprinkle with lavender oil and sew open side. Enjoy the calming scents provided by your new sachet.

## Honey

Try mixing honey into warmed milk or herbal teas to benefit from its sedating qualities. Add one teaspoon honey and one drop vanilla extract to a cup of warm milk and enjoy immediately before going to sleep.

## ***Vitamin & Mineral Supplements***

By adding vitamins and minerals to your balanced diet, you might find relief from sleeplessness. Many people are not getting enough of certain vitamins and minerals that are needed for sleeping well. One of these nutritional supplements may help:

- **Calcium.** Too little calcium in your diet can cause the inability to sleep. Combine a daily 600mg supplement with food for the best effect.
- **Magnesium.** A deficiency in magnesium can cause nervousness resulting in shallow sleeping and the inability to stay asleep. A supplement of 250g

taken daily, or the addition of magnesium-rich foods such as almonds, kelp and wheat bran can help.

- **Vitamin B-6 (pyridoxine).** Vitamin B-6 is needed to produce the levels of serotonin required by the body to trigger sleep. The recommended dosage of B-6 is 50-100mg daily, and can be taken in nutritional yeast form and mixed into a glass of fruit juice.
- **Vitamin B-12 (cobalamin).** If you don't get enough B-12, you may experience grogginess, confusion, or memory loss, and insomnia. B-12 is often combined with B-5, and is found naturally in wheat germ, bananas, peanuts and sunflower seeds. If taken as a supplement, the recommended dosage is 25mg per day.
- **Vitamin B-5 (pantothenic acid).** Too little B-5 can cause insomnia and tiredness. Vitamin B-5 works as an anxiety reducer, and a daily dose of 100mg is recommended.
- **Folic acid.** The synthetic supplement of folic acid is processed by the body more effectively than folic acid found in nature. Too little folic acid can cause insomnia. Foods containing folic acid include leafy roughage, orange juice, beans and fortified breakfast cereal. The recommended dosage is 400mg per day.
- **Copper.** According to a recent study, pre-menopausal women with a deficiency in copper commonly have difficulty falling asleep. In this study, women taking 2mg of copper daily fell asleep quicker and felt more refreshed when waking. A good way to include more copper in your diet is by eating cooked oysters and lobster.

A balanced diet is the best way to combat vitamin deficiencies. You can try adding a few supplements to see if you notice a substantial difference. If you do not see a notable change, stop supplementing and focus of eating well and exercising regularly.



## ***Conclusion***

This book has provided you with a number of ways to fight sleep problems naturally, without relying on harmful or potentially addicting narcotics or other medications. When trying these alternative methods, test a couple at a time so that you can more easily identify what works well for you, and what doesn't. Select methods that you can commit to and apply right away.

As with any medical concern, don't hesitate to contact your doctor to discuss your sleep problems and determine if your symptoms may be related to your general health. Your physician can guide you through traditional channels, as well as the natural remedies detailed in the book. The main priorities are handling your sleep-related problems, and protecting your overall health.