



7 TOP TIPS TO SLEEP BETTER

Top Tip #1: get some morning sunshine

Exposure to morning sunlight is critical for quality sleep as it helps set your circadian rhythm (i.e. body clock). Even on the dullest day you're still exposed to more light outside than you would be indoors. Just being outside, even if it's overcast, is a great way to start your day refreshed and get your brain switched on and ready to take on challenges. Avoid sunglasses so that you get as much natural light as possible. Why not have you breakfast or coffee outside or go for a morning walk?

Top Tip #2: stop indulging in electronic devices late in the evening

Turn off phones and laptops at least 90 minutes before bedtime. Phones, computers and TVs emit blue light, which mimics the effect of the morning sun on the brain. Looking at your phone at night therefore tells your brain to stay awake and disrupts of the production and secretion of the sleep hormone melatonin. If you have to work late at night on your laptop or your phone, you may want to either consider investing in special blue light suppressing glasses, install an blue light lowering app (f.lux or Twilight) or use the night-time mode.

Top Tip #3: have a bedtime routine

Make sure you take time to wind and relax before bed time. Why not have a warming bath with magnesium flakes, read a book or listen to some relaxing music? Winding down as well as having a set bedtime will help you nod off more easily, improve sleep quality and wake up refreshed. In terms of quantity, aim for no less than 7-9 hours sleep.

Top Tip #4: reduce your caffeine intake

You are tired and you rely on coffee to keep you going throughout the day? I get it but let me break it to you: this is not doing you any favour if you already have a sleep issue as it is a stimulant.

Although caffeine does not affect us all equally, having caffeine after 12pm can really impact your ability to fall (and stay) asleep.

Caffeine has a half life of 6 hours (which means that half of the caffeine is still in your system after 6 hours) and a quarter life of 12 hours (a quarter of it will still circulate in your body after 12 hours). If you have trouble sleeping, consider switching some of your cups of coffee (especially after 12pm) to decaf!

Top Tip #5: eat foods that help you sleep

Melatonin, our sleep hormone, is synthesised from serotonin (our happy hormone) which is itself derived from an amino acid called tryptophan.

Therefore consuming foods rich tryptophan 2 hours before going to bed, such as poultry (turkey & chicken), fish (salmon & cod), dairy products (milk & cheese), eggs, spinach, nuts and seeds (pumpkin/sesame/sunflower seeds, almonds, cashews, peanut, walnuts), bananas, kiwis and oats may be helpful in promoting sleep.

Magnesium rich food also promote relaxation by calming the nervous system and regulate melatonin. Magnesium rich foods are nuts such as almonds or cashews nuts, tofu, brown rice, green leafy vegetables or avocado.

Montmorreny tart juice (such as Cherry Active), by increasing tryptophan availability, may also help improve the quality and duration of sleep and reduce the severity of insomnia.

Top Tip #6: try my 'Good Night' smoothie

This smoothie is packed with sleep promoting ingredients (see top tip #5). Have it at least 1 hour before going to bed, no chugging down!

In a blender (nutribullet), combine:

- 1 banana
- 1 kiwi
- 1 large handful of spinach
- 2 tbsp of rolled or gluten-free oats
- 1 tbsp of almond butter
- top with (warm or cold) milk or dairy-free milk (almond/cashew/oat)

Top Tip #7: why is sleep so important?

Sleep is so important for our physical and emotional well-being. Without adequate quantity and quality of sleep, you may find it difficult to concentrate, make judgments and take part in daily activities. You may also become more irritable.

Sleep allows the body (amongst many other things) to:

- rest (for e.g. your heart rate and muscle tone decrease) and repair (e.g. immunity, muscle recovery, cells turnaround)
- conserve energy (due to a lower metabolic rate)
- consolidate memories and learning (remember your parents telling there was no point cramming the night before an exam and that you should have a good night sleep... they were right!)
- regulate appetite hormones (you may be reaching for carbs if you have a bad night sleep)

Still not convinced sleep is important? I urge you to read Matthew Walker's book 'Why we sleep'.

If you still need help to get your sleep back on track and want to wake up feeling refreshed and fully of energy ready to take on the day, email me at christelle@keepcalmnutrition.co.uk