- Sleep / Rest



Your sleep problems SORTED

Get to the root of what's ruining your rest and fix it, for good!

Missing out on a decent night's sleep can leave you feeling tired and irritable, but it also has long-term effects on health. 'Increased sensitivity to pain, lower immune function, higher risk of type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure, as well as a greater risk of chronic diseases and Alzheimer's, are among the downsides of poor sleep,' says nutritionist and wellbeing expert Alison Cullen from A. Vogel.

Ready to find out what might be keeping you awake at night? You can then make the right tweaks to boost your sleep quantity and quality and, in turn, improve your body and mind.

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Waking in the night

It's normal to stir several times, but it's the inability to get back to sleep that's problematic. Common reasons include stress, pain or discomfort and fluctuating hormones during the menopause, which can result in hot flushes and night sweats.

TRY TO:

✱ DRINK PLENTY THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Mild dehydration is one of the biggest triggers to waking, so try drinking around two litres of water a day. If you wake needing to go to the loo, restrict fluids for two hours before bed.

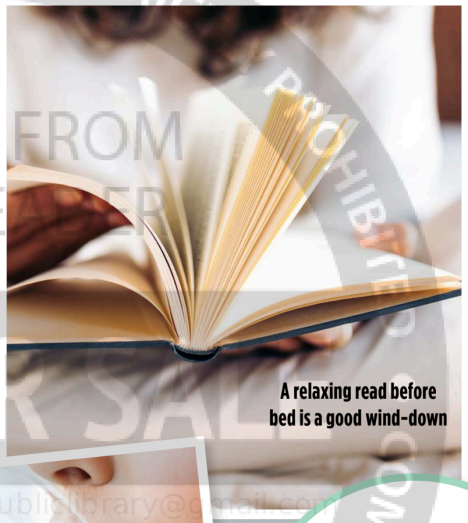
✱ KEEP COOL

'Up to 85% of women experience hot flushes during the menopause, which can disrupt rest,' says sleep expert Dr Nerina Ramlakhan. Light, cotton nightwear and bedding can help reduce menopausal night sweats.

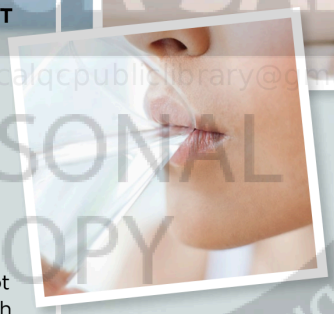
✱ CHANGE YOUR SLEEPING POSITION

The healthiest position is on your side, with your head, neck and spine aligned.





A relaxing read before bed is a good wind-down



Rising too early

Being disturbed, especially by light in high summer, is common. But even falling asleep too quickly can signify a problem, says psychologist and sleep expert Chireal Shallow. 'It should take 7-11 minutes. If you routinely fall asleep faster and wake too early feeling tired, you could be sleep-deprived and need to make changes.'

TRY TO:

✱ GET PLENTY OF NATURAL LIGHT

Daylight helps regulate your natural sleep cycle. Aim to move your body outdoors every day.

✱ KEEP YOUR BEDROOM DARK

Or wear an eye mask to block bright summer mornings or outside street lights. And ban pets from the bedroom as they're common early-morning sleep disruptors.

✱ RELAX YOUR MUSCLES BEFORE BEDTIME

A muscle relaxation routine or meditation at night can prepare your body for long, restful sleep.

DOWNLOAD...

The NHS-recommended app Pzizz (free, App Store & Google Play). It helps soothe you to sleep with mixes of music, voices and sound effects.

Not feeling refreshed

'Failing to cycle through the sleep stages will reduce the body's ability to repair, detoxify and clear mental debris, leaving you feeling mentally foggy and physically fatigued,' says Alison. If you're tired in the mornings, you may be waking too often or have an underlying health problem, such as sleep apnoea or restless legs syndrome. See your GP to rule these out.

TRY TO:

✱ RESTRICT ALCOHOL

It makes you more likely to sleep lighter, wake through the night and spend less time in deep sleep stage.

✱ GO TO BED AND GET UP AT THE SAME TIME EVERY DAY

Aim for between six and eight hours of sleep a night, and avoid daytime naps.

✱ LOVE LAVENDER

'It's acknowledged as a sleep aid by the World Health Organisation,' explains herbalist Dr Chris Etheridge. Spritz your bedroom with Puressentiel Rest & Relax Air Spray (£16.90 for 75ml, uk.puressentiel.com) to get the benefits.

Trouble drifting off

Not being able to switch off a busy brain before bed is very common, says sleep expert Dr Irshaad Ebrahim from the London Sleep Centre. 'It's not helped by our hectic, modern lives with 24/7 access to mobiles and tablets.'

TRY TO:

✱ ESTABLISH A WIND-DOWN ROUTINE

Read or have a warm bath and ban all screens at least an hour before bed. 'Interacting with your phone, even on sleep mode with the sound down and light low, stimulates the release of pleasure hormones dopamine and adrenaline, which will keep you awake,' says Dr Ebrahim. The screen's light interferes with melatonin, which regulates sleep cycles.

✱ DON'T GO TO BED HUNGRY

Snack on sleep-inducing foods, such as bananas, cheese, eggs, turkey and milk.

✱ CUT BACK ON CAFFEINE

Coffee, tea and even hot chocolate contain the stimulant that prevents sleep. Avoid them after midday.

SOOTHING SIPS

Enjoy a naturally caffeine-free bedtime drink, such as Heath & Heather Organic Soft and Sleepy Night Time (£2.62, Holland and Barrett).



CATCHING ZZZZs ON HOLIDAY

Don't let restless nights spoil your summer getaway...

1 **Request an upper-floor room that is away from the street noise and stairwells, lifts and bars.**

2 **Try using an eye mask and ear plugs to block out noise from other guests. Cool your mask in the mini bar, two hours before bed.**

3 **Watch what you eat. 'Make your midday meal your largest and have a light dinner at least three hours before bedtime,' says Alison.**



Try an eye mask to stop you waking at first light

PHOTOS (POSED BY MODELS): GETTY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP