

## **4 Simple Strategies For A Better Night's Sleep**

Our body's internal clock is located within the brain and the onset of sleep is influenced, in the main, by hormones (cortisol, melatonin & serotonin), light and nutrition. With those things in mind, modern day life provides factors for us all that means we are not lead by our internal clock but instead the societal 9-5 clock. Other influences such as artificial light from phones, TV etc. can all influence our ability to gain quality sleep – even if you drift off on the sofa often the bathroom is the last room you go in before bed and it has the brightest light!

As we spend 36% of our lives is spent asleep, improving the quality of such sleep is obviously important.

Here are 4 strategies you could use to try and improve your sleep, courtesy of Perform Ready Clinic...

### **Tip #1 Make relaxation your goal, not sleep**

Muscle soreness, adrenaline, caffeine, thoughts or general worries can increase stress hormone levels and conflict with you 'trying' to get to sleep.

Instead of trying to battle your way to sleep try to make relaxation your goal. Implementing techniques like self-meditation can help to de-stress the mind. This does not necessarily have to be a stereotypical form of meditation like making humming noises and listening to dolphin music (although this can work great), reading a book can be equally as good.

If you cannot sleep do not try.

### **Tip #2 Less light at night**

Bright lights cue your body to wake up, this includes using your mobile phone in a dark room – although some have an extra dim setting, its best to try to avoid using your mobile in your bedroom all together.

Things to try...

- Set your alarm earlier in the evening so you don't have to mess with your phone immediately prior to going to bed
- The bathroom is often the brightest room in the house and the last room you usually attend before bed. Brushing your teeth after the last meal of the day can help to limit this exposure so close to sleeping.

### **Tip #3 Stay cool**

Your body has systems to control its temperature and is affected by 4 things...

- Exercise
- Objects
- Illness

- The environment

If your body's thermoregulatory demands are high at night due to an overly warm environment then this adds load or 'stress' to the central nervous system that is trying to rest and recover.

Things to try...

- Get the room temperature right: 19 degrees Celsius is optimal room temperature, for kids you can try a bit warmer (20-21 degrees)
- Cold baths or showers for 5-10 minutes can help to get a head start to reducing thermoregulatory load. Performing meditation or breathing techniques in a cold bath or showers are also great to get your body in a more relaxed state.

#### **Tip #4 Nutrition**

There are a million and one suggestions about vitamins and supplements but some of them are hot air with no real proof that they work.

Less complex carbohydrates (white breads, rice, cereals, potatoes and pastas) aren't the devil, especially straight after exercise. Eating these types of carbohydrates instead of lower GI foods (sweet potatoes, wholegrain versions) approx. 4 hrs before bedtime raises the production of a hormone that controls when you sleep then wake up, which would help you get to sleep if this is something you struggle with.

Magnesium has been shown to decrease levels of stress hormones significantly. It also works as muscle relaxant. Magnesium is found in nuts, cheeses and red meat.

We hope these strategies will help you get a good night's sleep.

Have a go at implementing some of the tips above and let us know how you get on.

Thanks for reading

Ben