



## **How to Have a Fantastic Night's Sleep and Wake Up Refreshed in the Morning**

**By Dr Peter Holsman**

Lots of people complain about being tired. If only they could have more sleep. Some are not getting enough sleep ... and others are missing out on quality sleep. A proportion suffers a combination of both poor quality sleep and a shortage of sleep time.

Experts say that the amount of sleep need varies. Some people such as Jeff Kennett was reported to be satisfied with 5 hours a night. Margaret Thatcher, the former British Prime Minister, could get by on 4 hours. However, for most of us mere mortals, more sleep is needed, and we are not getting it.

In industrialised countries in the last century, people have been sleeping less. In 1910, the average person slept nine hours a night, but by 1975 it had fallen to 7.5 hours. Americans - according to a 2002 poll commissioned by the National Sleep Foundation- sleep an average of 6.9 hours a night. The foundation says that 6.9 hours is not enough, and leads to fatigue, exhaustion and other health problems.

Insomnia is defined as difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep and is a common problem. In any given year, about one third of adults experience sleep difficulties. For some people this is a temporary condition , however for other people the insomnia may persist and become chronic.

There are many conditions or situations that commonly lead to insomnia. They include stresses related to work or study ; difficulties with family or friends ; bereavement ; excess coffee and alcohol ; hormonal changes such as seen in menopause or an overactive thyroid gland; snoring and sleep apnoea syndrome.

Depression is a common cause of sleep disturbance , although there is increasing evidence that insomnia itself may result in mood disorders.

The amount of advice about improving the quality of sleep is enormous . So what do you do if you are dragging yourself out of bed for weeks , months or even years?

Where do you start? Can you supercharge the general advice?

Treatment needs to address underlying causes such as described above. Approximately 70% of people find that the quality of their sleep improves with behavioural interventions such as a sleep diary , counselling for any stresses , and relaxation and hypnotherapy techniques. Formal sleep studies in a hospital may be appropriate where sleep apnoea is suspected.

Integrative medical practitioners will often prescribe calcium and magnesium , and such herbs as valerian , hops and skullcap to enhance sleep. Herbs with antidepressant properties such as St. John's Wort may also be indicated. Other treatments choices include 5-hydroxytryptophan (5-HTP) which raises Serotonin levels and in turn induces sleep ,and melatonin especially where there is jet lag or night shift work .

### **Basic Sleep Hygiene Tips**

The following sleep hygiene tips will generally enhance treatments for insomnia:

**Only sleep or make love in bed.** Other activities, such as reading, watching TV, reviewing the day, planning activities of the next day, or eating, should not occur in bed. If you want to, or need to do these other activities, then get up and go into another room.

**If you are awake 20 minutes after retiring,** get up and engage in a constructive activity such as reading, cleaning or craftwork. If it is reading, choose something you find unexciting e.g. Shakespeare , a textbook.

**Maintain consistent bedtimes** and wake up times, even on weekends and holidays . Set the alarm at the same time each morning. Avoid taking naps in the day time.

**Sleep in as dark a room as possible.** Light disrupts your circadian rhythm and your pineal glands production of Melatonin and Serotonin.

**Stop watching TV** at least one hour before going to bed as it stimulates brain activity.

**Keep a pencil and piece of paper next to your bed.** Write down distracting thoughts or future tasks so you can that need to be dealt with at an appropriate time the next day.

**Get to bed by 10 pm** where possible. The Chinese body clock shows that most of the body functions, including brain chemistry, hormones, liver and gallbladder repair and regenerate at night.

**Exercise regularly** for at least 30 minutes every day. However don't exercise close to bed or it may keep you awake.

**Avoid foods to which you may be sensitive.** For example, some people find that wheat and dairy cause nasal congestion, stomach discomfort or gas.

**Lose weight.** Being overweight can increase the risk of sleep apnoea and snoring, both of which result in oxygen deprivation and poor quality sleep.

**Reduce alcohol.** Many people wake several hours after drinking alcohol, unable to get back to sleep. It also makes it harder for you to reach the deeper, healing stages of sleep.

**Stop drinking fluids within two hours of going to bed** to reduce the need to go to the toilet.

**Have the bedroom window slightly open** for fresh air.

**Seek help to deal with emotional stresses,** whether they are to do with relationships, work, direction in life, finances or other health issues.

**Listen to relaxing music or the special “How to have a great nights sleep” CD** program that is available through this website as it will help you relax, sort out relevant issues and reprogram the quality sleep that you need.

Dr Peter Holsman is an accomplished medical practitioner and enthralling public speaker who enjoys helping people stay young and energetic. His entertaining and actionpacked presentations are for every one who wants to get the most out of life and for organisations that want to put life back into their people. For more information visit [www.liveto100.com.au](http://www.liveto100.com.au) or phone Your Health Camberwell on 03 9882 5151.