

[IMAGE]

It's Time for Better Sleep

By Editorial Staff

OK, quick quiz: How much has your sleep been affected during the coronavirus pandemic? We're not just talking about the amount of sleep; after all, some people may actually be getting more sleep than usual if they've been out of work, restricted in where they can go, etc. Then again, losing your job or spending more time glued to the COVID-19 updates on TV or your cellphone probably isn't helping your stress levels, which isn't helping you sleep, either.

Here's question #2: How well are you sleeping? Sleeping for eight hours a night and sleeping well for eight hours are two entirely different things. You can hit the bed at 10 p.m. and roll out of bed at 6 a.m., but those eight hours may have been filled with tossing, turning, stressing, thinking and never getting to the deep, restorative sleep your body and brain need.

If any of the above applies to you, and we're certain it applies to literally millions of people these days, it's time to do something about it. It's time for better sleep. Here's a simple three-step plan to do it:

1. *Tune It Out*: We know this can be easier said than done, but we all need to try. Particularly in today's social-media-driven world, it's far too easy to get news, opinions, and conversations at your fingertips, 24/7. The more we tune in, the more we take in, obsess about, reflect upon; and all that information stays in our brains, even as we try to get to sleep. *Tips*: Pick a few times during the day to review the latest news, check your social media, etc. Ignore the rest. Most of all, don't tune in right before bed, or you'll be up all night thinking, instead of resting.

bad sleep - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark 2. *Block It Out*: We live in a fashion-over-function world, and our homes are a great example. We're inundated with home renovation shows that teach us to crave a certain "look," even if that look doesn't deliver the function we need. Does your bedding look amazing ... but keep you hot (or cold) all night? Do your window treatments keep your bedroom dark – we mean *really* dark – all night? Do you have a high-tech flat-screen TV mounted on your bedroom wall ... that you tend to watch into the wee hours? *Tips*: If you're going to achieve quality sleep, your bedroom has to be a help, not a hindrance. Fashion without function in your bedroom equals restless nights that will

compromise your health.

3. *Calm It Down*: We've already told you to tune it out a few hours before bedtime; but you have to take it a big step beyond TV and technology. Much like a car, your body has trouble going from 100 miles an hour to a complete stop; it needs a slow, gradual deceleration. Unfortunately, when it comes to eating and exercise habits, too many people make a similar mistake. Eating or exercising right before bed essentially puts your body into overdrive, rather than slowing it down.

In the case of exercise, your muscles are initiating the repair process, rather than resting. In the case of food, your body is starting the digestion process. Either way, it's a poor way to wind down. *Tips*: Try to exercise / eat your last meal of the day at least 2-3 hours before bedtime. Also keep in mind that if your last meal is particularly greasy, fatty, sugary or fibrous, it could compromise sleep before it even gets started.

Sleep is rapidly being recognized as a major factor in overall health and wellness, with chronic poor sleep linked to a higher risk of numerous health issues. But don't take our word for it; just reflect on how your body feels after a poor night's sleep. Now extrapolate that to weeks, months or even years of inadequate, poor-quality sleep. Talk to your doctor for more information.

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