

## HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OUR SLEEP?

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### Promote Sleep

There's a lot you can do to regain control over your sleep. Minor lifestyle and environmental changes – such as preparing for sleep, following a sleep schedule, and making your bedroom conducive to sleep – can have a major impact. And if you do shift work, there are ways to meet the unique challenges you face.

### Prepare for Sleep

Setting the stage for a good night's sleep can help you get your mind and body into "sleep mode."

#### EARLIER IN THE DAY

- Eat a high-protein snack or a small piece of fruit before bed. For some, its best to avoid bed-time snacks. Especially avoid before-bed snacks that contain grains and sugars.
- Avoid Caffeine
- Avoid Alcohol
- Don't drink any fluids within 2 hours of going to bed.
- Avoid foods which you may be sensitive to. This is particularly true for dairy and wheat products.
- Avoid heavy, spicy, or high-sugar foods.
- Avoid smoking.

#### BEDROOM

- Sleep in complete darkness or as close as possible. Wear an eye mask to block out light if need be.
- No TV right before bed.
- Wear socks to bed.
- Avoid using loud alarm clocks.
- Try using a sun alarm clock.
- Block out noise.
- Get to bed as early as possible.
- Check your bedroom for electro-magnetic fields (EMFs).
- Keep the temperature in the bedroom no higher than 70 degrees F.
- Move the alarm clocks and other electrical devices. Remove the clock from view as well.
- Take a hot bath, shower or sauna before bed.
- Keep your bed for sleeping.
- Establish a bedtime routine.
- Don't change your bed time.
- Address your partner's sleep problems.
- Have your pet sleep somewhere else.
- Go to the bathroom right before bed.

- Put your work away at least one hour (but preferably two or more) before bed.

### **RELAX YOUR BODY**

- Relaxation techniques
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Once in bed, close your eyes and simply “feel your body”, relax.
- Use calming aromatherapy essential oils.

### **UNWIND MENTALLY**

- Once in bed, try to stop worrying.
- Use Mental Relaxation Techniques
- Use relaxation music
- Try white noise
- Read something spiritual or religious.
- Journaling

### **OTHER HELPS**

- Reduce or avoid as many drugs as possible.
- Lose weight.
- Have your adrenals checked by a good natural medicine clinician.
- If you are menopausal or peri-menopausal, get checked out by a good natural medicine physician.
- Use a neti pot to improve your breathing.
- Make certain you are exercising regularly. Avoid exercising within three hours of bedtime.
- Try acupuncture. It will help you to resolve the health issues impeding your sleep.

**If your efforts to get quality sleep aren't working, you might want to talk to your natural healthcare provider about other ways to improve your sleep.**

Dr. Holly Carling is a Doctor of Oriental Medicine, Licensed Acupuncturist, Doctor of Naturopathy, Clinical Nutritionist and Master Herbologist with over 33 years of experience. Dr. Carling is currently accepting new patients and offers natural health care services and whole food nutritional supplements in her Coeur d' Alene clinic. Visit Dr. Carling's website at [www.vitalhealthandfitness.com](http://www.vitalhealthandfitness.com) to learn more about Dr. Carling, view a list of upcoming health classes and read other informative articles. Dr. Carling can be reached at 208-765-1994 and would be happy to answer any questions regarding this topic.