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8

WAYS to Get BETTER SLEEP



1. Control your light exposure

We sleep, on average, an hour less than we did a hundred years ago, and studies show electronic light is to blame. It fools your brain's internal clock and throws off your circadian rhythm.

To keep your internal clock properly adjusted, it's important to get as much natural light exposure during the daytime as you can. You can get the most light exposure around noon, so a 15-minute walk at lunchtime can do wonders.

Light exposure during the day is one of the best productivity hacks. As soon as you wake up, get as much light exposure as you can to start your body clock. The light that hits your brain is released as serotonin, which improves your mood, reverses depression, and makes you feel more energized to take on your day. In places where it's winter, many people use lightboxes, which they report are as effective as coffee in terms of the energy they can give you.

To cut down on jet lag, get as much exposure to natural light as you can in your new destination. This will help reset your body clock.

At night when you go to sleep, block off all light. Light interferes with melatonin production and can give you poorer quality sleep.

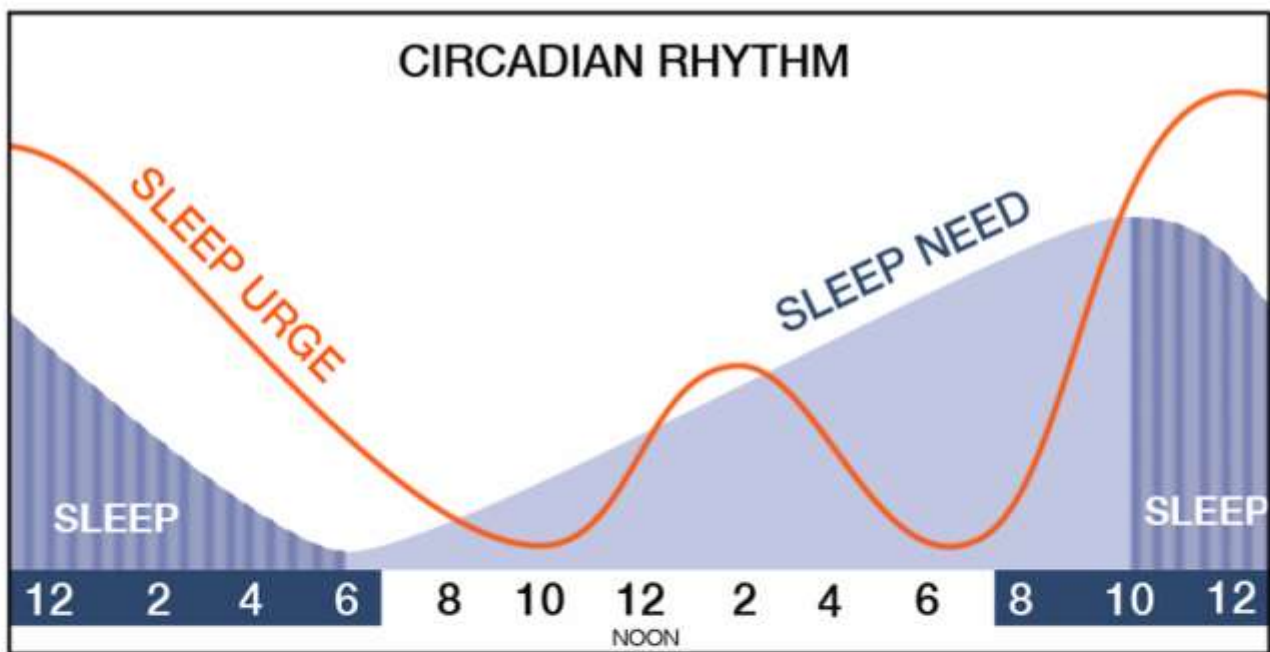
2. Work with your circadian rhythm

The circadian rhythm resembles a 24-hour clock, with your energy level always rising and falling throughout the day. It corresponds to the light that enters your



eyes, so as mentioned before, if you want to reduce jet lag, get as much exposure as possible to natural light.

Your circadian rhythm correlates to your levels of alertness, of energy, how much you're able to perform during the day. So you have your highest level of alertness mid morning, during which you'll want to tackle your most important or most difficult tasks. It dips to its lowest point around mid afternoon, 3 p.m., at which point you might want to take a nap, and rises again after 5 p.m.

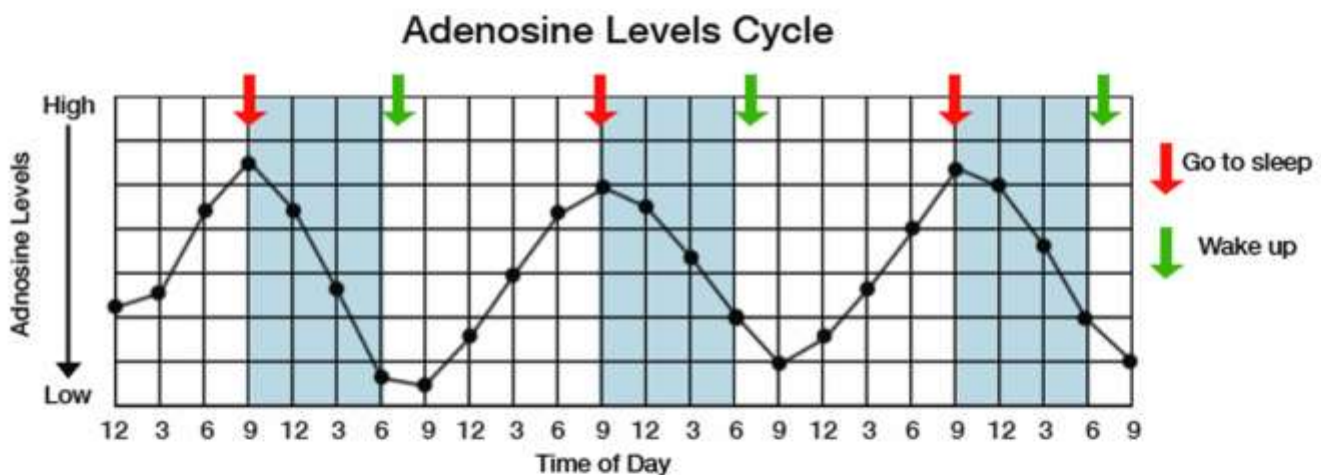


The rhythm also corresponds to body temperature, its lowest point being around 2 or 3 a.m., when you'll ideally be fast asleep.



3. Understanding the "sleep toxin"

Adenosine is a hormone that accumulates in the body while we're awake, making us tired at night and helping us sleep.



Adenosine builds up in the brain during wakefulness.

- We have low levels just after sleeping.
- We have high levels after being awake for a long time.

One of the best ways to sleep better at night is to force yourself to do more hard work during the day. Adenosine build-up in the brain and body corresponds to the activity level of your body's neurons. So if you operate at a high level mentally or physically, you build up more adenosine and have higher quality sleep.



4. Watch your caffeine

Caffeine wards off fatigue by blocking adenosine accumulation in the brain. It's certainly useful when you need that boost of energy, but bear in mind that it has a long shelf life. The coffee you drink at 4 p.m. can take more than 12 hours to completely exit your bloodstream. The 50 percent that's still in your system by 10 p.m. can mean poorer quality sleep. So if you really need that coffee fix but know it affects your shut-eye, have your cup of joe as early in the day as possible.

5. Lower your cortisol

Cortisol is essentially the stress hormone, and while it usually gets a bad rep, it helps us get things done and overcome the challenges of everyday life. The trouble is when we continue producing cortisol over an extended period, and don't allow the levels to drop. A lot of us live in a fast-moving culture where stress levels are constantly high, affecting our ability to sleep.

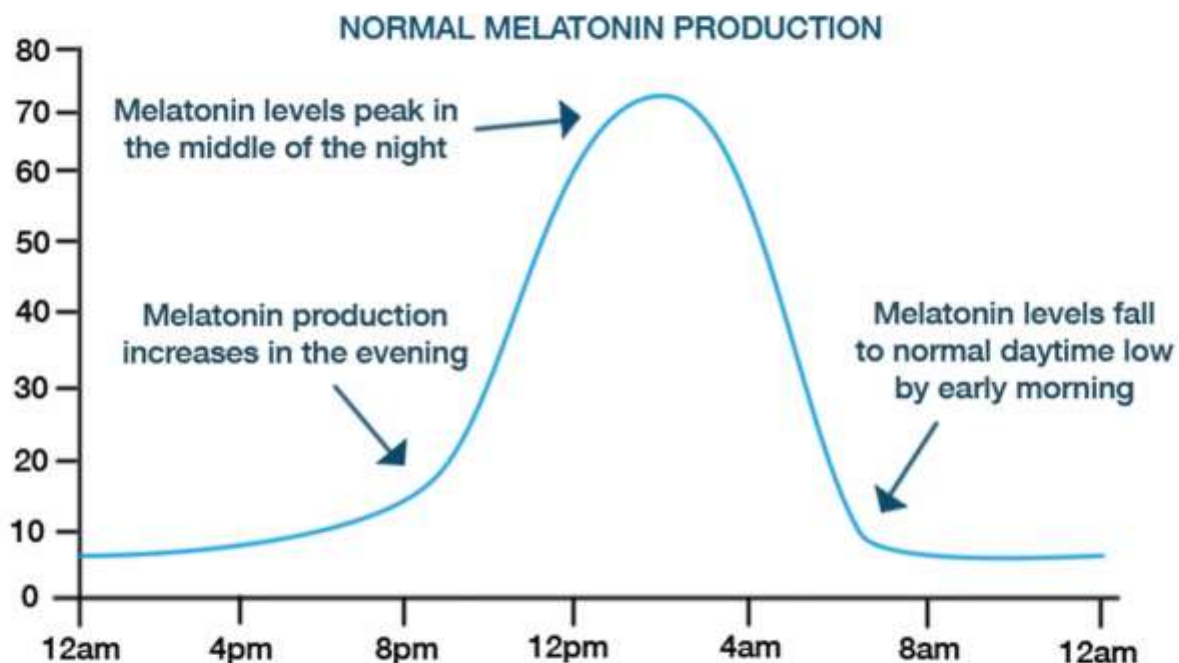
Look for daily activities that can help you reduce your cortisol when you need to rest. You can listen to music, you can keep a gratitude journal, you can do dancing, yoga, meditation, breathing, spending time with friends - anything that contributes to relaxation. Magnesium has also been shown to reduce cortisol levels.

6. Boosting melatonin

Melatonin is a natural hormone that increases in the blood around 9 p.m., making you feel less alert and helping you fall asleep at the appropriate hour. Studies have



found that eating foods like bananas or pineapples a few hours before bedtime can increase melatonin and help you catch better quality z's. Pineapples, especially, can raise your melatonin levels by 266 percent.



7. How meditation can help

There are four brain waves that we toggle through when we sleep. Beta is when we are wide awake, alpha is when we go through like a meditation, theta is when we go through a light sleep, and then delta is the deep sleep, when we're very close to being in a coma. Science has shown us that meditation can actually help us move from a beta state, to an alpha state So if you want to naturally move to a relaxed



state where you're ready to fall asleep, you can try meditation.

Start breathing three or four seconds in, three or four seconds out, slowing your breathing down. (If you can't fall asleep within 30 minutes, you may need to get out of bed. Go do some activity for a while, maybe go for a walk, and then try to fall asleep again.)

8. Sleep restriction

One of the most powerful sleep therapies is sleep restriction, where you basically force yourself to stay awake longer. If you're going to bed at say 11 p.m. and waking up at 7 a.m. but not getting quality sleep, you might try the next night to fall asleep at 1 a.m., and then get up at 5 a.m. The next day, add an extra half an hour to your sleep time, then another extra half an hour each succeeding day.