

THE CENTER for CLINICAL MASSAGE

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A good night's sleep

Tips to help you fall asleep

Insomnia is a problem for many people, and the worry about not sleeping can become a problem of its own. Occasional insomnia is common and may be a response to excitement or temporary problems. It will do you no harm as long as you remain reasonably energetic when you're awake. Also, you may not realize that you need less sleep as you get older, and may think you have insomnia when you can't get the hours you were used to getting.

If you do feel over tired or too tense to relax, try the following tips. If you don't get results, consult your physician — it's possible you may be experiencing anxiety or depression.

Don't work in bed. If the bedroom is used for paying bills or studying, going to bed can become a signal to become active rather than to go to sleep.



Relaxing in a warm bath before bed can help you fall asleep.



Regular bodywork can improve your ability to relax, helping to improve your sleep in the hours and days following a session.

Get some exercise every day so your body feels tired at night.

Try a warm bath before bed. Add Epsom salts if you are achy, or 5–10 drops of lavender or chamomile essential oil if you are stressed.

Make sure your bed is comfortable and that you are not too hot or cold.

Avoid alcohol and caffeine in the evening.

Establish a routine, by going to bed close to the same time every night.

If you aren't sleeping, get out of bed and stay up until you are tired. The next morning get up at your normal time and try to make it through the day without napping.

A snack before bed helps many people, but a big meal may keep you up as your digestive system works overtime.

Use relaxation techniques such as slow abdominal breathing. Before bed, sit in a comfortable position and breathe slowly, concentrating on filling your belly like a balloon. Continue for up to 5 minutes at a time, but stop if you get dizzy.

Try some gentle floor stretches before bed. Lying down with your feet on the floor and your knees up, lower your knees from side to side. Come back to center, and tilt your pelvis forward and back several times. Slowly turn your head from side to side. Stretch gently and slowly anywhere you feel tight.

Get bodywork. Bodywork can relieve persistent muscle tension. This can help you feel deeply relaxed, and can improve the quality of your sleep the evening of a session and in the following days.

Gardening for stress relief

Let mother nature lift your spirits

Some people garden to produce mouth-watering fruits and vegetables, and others to win a prize at the county fair. More and more gardeners, however, are spending hours in their yards to reduce stress and increase their feeling of well-being.

Whether tending a vegetable garden or growing heirloom roses, gardening can provide physical exercise, foster a feeling of accomplishment, and soothe an agitated mind. It also allows you to absorb the sights, textures and sounds of the natural world and become more attuned to the cycles of the seasons. It can be your creative outlet, your meditation, a workout to relieve physical tension — or all three.

Working in harmony with natural forces

Some people garden in the same way they approach the rest of their lives, checking off a list of to-do's in a scramble to keep up with the demands of preparing, planting, tending and harvesting. But even for “type-A” gardeners, there is no way to hurry up your strawberries, petunias or cucumbers. It does take work to maintain a garden, but growing plants requires that you work in harmony with the forces of nature, not against them.



Working in the garden can exercise the body and restore the mind.

Start small

If you're interested in gardening, but your experience has been limited to a few indoor plants and mowing your lawn, start small. Pick a small area to till and plant a few easy-to-grow vegetables like bush beans or zucchini, mixed in with some marigolds and other annual flowers. If you decide to take on a larger project, remember to allow time to savor the beauty and calm of your little piece of heaven on earth.



Take rest; a field that has rested gives a bountiful crop.

—Ovid