



Get Your Best Sleep Yet; No Prescription Needed

By Samantha Bove

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), one in three U.S. adults don't get enough sleep. Crankiness and fatigue are not the only side effects of chronic sleep deprivation. If you are not getting between 7 and 9 hours of sleep per night, you are at a higher risk for developing depression, anxiety, diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure, and heart disease. If you think that 9 hours seems like an unreasonable amount of time, you are not alone. Millions of Americans struggle to turn off their racing minds and get the adequate amount of rest they need. The pharmaceutical industry has taken advantage this, turning our restless nights into an extremely profitable, billion-dollar industry by prescribing anxiety and sleeping pills. These medications are not only overprescribed, but also come with a slew side effects including, but not limited to, changes in appetite, headaches, heartburn, unusual dreams, constipation, dizziness, and prolonged drowsiness. Here are a the top three things I have found to be most effective in helping me get the rest I need, without pills.

- 1. Turn off the electronics.** It comes as no surprise that light disrupts one's ability to fall and stay asleep, but blue light (the light that is emitted from your computer and smartphone) is even more detrimental to your sleep cycle as it penetrates all the way to the retina, unlike other types of lights such as green and red. In a Harvard [study](#) researchers found that after 6.5 hours of exposure, blue light suppressed melatonin for about twice as long as the green light and shifted circadian rhythms by twice as much (3 hours vs. 1.5 hours). Research suggests limiting your exposure to blue lights at least two hours before your bedtime. There are also numerous applications and screen protectors you could invest in to limit your exposure, while protecting your eyes and enhancing your quality of sleep.
- 2. Up your herbs.** Herbs including valerian, magnolia, chamomile, passionflower, and ashwagandha possess sleep-promoting properties and calming effects. These herbs come in many forms, including capsules and teas. I suggest the tea form if possible, as the ritual of making the tea before bed is in itself a calming experience.
- 3. Mediate.** Mindfulness meditation is growing in popularity due to helpful apps such as [Headspace](#), which walks users through the process of meditation step by step. This mind-calming practice focuses on breath and awareness of the present moment. More and more emerging research links meditation, even as little as ten minutes a day, to reduced insomnia symptoms, improved quality of sleep, reduced stress, and increased focus throughout the day.