

## Sleep hygiene

We understand the importance of dental hygiene and when it comes to hormones, digestion and mental health sleep hygiene shows up as being a crucial way to optimise these elements of health.

### Sleep – your circadian rhythm

Sleep is crucial for healing, recovery and wellbeing. As part of our circadian rhythm it's also when we regulate and set our cortisol pattern. Having a healthy circadian rhythm means you can wake with energy as you get your cortisol waking response, and then maintain energy throughout the day. You are conversely able to switch off at night as cortisol levels drop, making way for the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin.

Being in bed by 10pm allows the crucial first stages of healing and recovery. Between 10pm and 2am is when physical repair occurs. And following that, 2am – 6am allows for psychological repair and recovery.

We suggest you don't be attached to the outcome straight away. It might take several weeks for your body to fall into your new bedtime pattern.

Think about how you settle a newborn baby or young child – dinner, bath, bed and book. Your body is no different in how it responds to the end of day routine. It's important to give your body signals about what is happening and over several weeks your body will begin to recognise the pattern of the evening wind-down. Here's how it can look:

- Eat **dinner early** (at least two hours before you go to bed)
  - Digesting food takes a lot of work. You want your body to be in the best possible position to heal while you sleep, so get the digesting done before you rest.
- **Do not drink alcohol** or have other **stimulating foods** or drinks.
  - Caffeine and similar stimulants are best had early in the day.
- Turn off all **electronics** a few hours before bed.
  - Blue light stops your body from producing melatonin. Watching screens signals our brain that it's daytime and you will be stimulated by this false sense of daylight and you're less likely to be able to go to sleep.
  - By turning off your ipad, tv, iphone, computer some time before sleep, your brain has the opportunity to start slowing down to be ready for sleep.
- Have a **strong** cup of camomile tea.
- Do your nightly bathroom protocol (brush teeth, makeup removal, etc).
- Quiet non-brain-intensive activity like reading, craft, knitting, art.
  
- When the sleep cycle arrives (melatonin comes in waves of around 70-90 minutes) you can simply get into bed.

In the weeks following the implementation of this sleep hygiene routine your body will recognise the cues and you're likely to be able to get to sleep more easily.



*If you have done your prep and you still can't get to sleep, don't fight it. Just meditate, read a book or do something you find calming. If you can, avoid turning on lights or watching anything. If you get up during the night for a bathroom break, try to do so without turning lights on – the light signals to your brain that the sun has come up, and falling back to sleep can be tricky.*