



### **A routine for establishing healthy sleep...**

This routine is especially helpful for re-establishing a healthy 8 1/2 to 9 1/2 hour sleep cycle in an individual who has chronically not been sleeping well, or who is suffering from the after effects of night shift work or jet lag.

- Select a time to go to bed so you can get 8 1/2 to 9 1/2 hours of sleep before the need to arise in the morning. Any hour of sleep before 11 PM is especially beneficial, and any hour of wakefulness after 1 AM is especially detrimental.
- Engage in some outdoor activity during the bright daylight hours around noon, even if it is only a 20-minute walk on the lunch hour. Bright natural light suppresses melatonin, and helps to establish the normal daily rhythm, with the melatonin rising again as sleep approaches. If possible, do your daily exercise in the daylight hours before 1 PM. This allows the body's metabolism to cool down before sleep. Physical exercise after sunset may be detrimental to sleep.
- A brief late-afternoon nap is OK. 20 minutes is ideal. Don't engage in physical exercise or intense, exciting activity after the nap.
- Have an early dinner, and be sure the stomach is empty before going to bed. 5-6 hours after the last meal is optimal, but at least 3 hours is necessary. The body's metabolism increases in response to food, and this elevation can promote insomnia.
- Don't engage in intense mental activity for at least 2 hours before bedtime. Light reading is OK.
- Turn off all bright lights as soon as possible after sunset, and very strictly for the last hour before bedtime. Use gentle candlelight instead of bright room light if possible.
- In the last 45-90 minutes before bed, take a neutral bath. (Not a hot bath) In a neutral bath, the water temperature should be 92-97 degrees F. It should feel somewhere between natural temperature and slightly warm to the individual. Add warm water as necessary to keep the bath from feeling cool. A treatment for insomnia could last from 15-60 minutes. During the last part of the bath, let the water cool down somewhat so it feels cool to the touch. The bathroom should be dimly lit, as with candlelight. A few drops of lavender essential oil may be added to the bath. Soft pleasant music may also be played. This treatment cools and slows the metabolism, while relaxing the nervous system. Lie down and rest in a horizontal position as soon as possible after the bath.

- Take a dose of mild sedative herbs 30-60 minutes before bed.
- Get horizontal for 30-60 minutes before going to sleep (after the bath if you take one). Read or watch television lying down. Remember, keep the lights dim.
- At the time you set to go to sleep, take another dose of sedative herbs, turn off all lights, draw the blinds or curtains if the moon is bright, and don't turn on any lights again until morning light comes. Say a prayer, release the events of the day to the Creator, make thanks for the good things of the day. Lie down in bed and relax. Think about natural things that you love, like animals, plants, trees, beautiful places in nature. Soft music may be played as you are going to sleep.
- If you wake up before 8 1/2 hours, roll over and go back to sleep. For recovery from sleep deficit, stay in bed for at least 9 1/2 hours, and take a twenty-minute nap in the late afternoon.
- Eat a substantial breakfast with abundant protein, and try to consume 80% of your daily protein requirements at breakfast and lunch. Protein raises body heat production.
- This routine will usually re-establish the sleep-wake cycle within 3 days. – Paul Bergner

Deborah Doering Austin, RN, DN  
Kamala Center for Radiant Health, PLLC  
1140 East 14th Street  
Houston, TX 77009

[www.kamalahealth.com](http://www.kamalahealth.com)  
[docdebe@kamalahealth.com](mailto:docdebe@kamalahealth.com)  
832-818-0186

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