

Can't sleep?

The quality of your slumber can naturally dip in winter, but a few easy lifestyle tweaks will have you snoozing soundly again. You already know how important a goodnight's rest is for your health. In spite of this, it can be hard to squeeze in those precious hours of shut eye. But an overbooked schedule may not be the only reason you are exhausted; the change in seasons could also be to blame.

Up to 20 percent of adults may experience mild seasonal affective disorder, which can be caused by a disruption in the body's natural circadian rhythm, triggered by fewer daylight hours in winter, and may lead to disordered sleep patterns, according to a 2013 study in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*.

Another issue: sleep apnea! This condition, which is characterised by pauses in breathing, may worsen in winter because of upper-airway infections (associated with colds) and irritation from indoor-air pollution (which can increase when we shut our windows to seal in heat). But sweet dreams can be yours with a few simple adjustments to your routine. Here's what to do.

GET A WHIFF OF LAVENDER

The trick for deep sleep is using a lavender-scented diffuser in the bedroom. The scent has long been known to have sedative properties, decreasing heart rate and blood pressure. In fact, a Wesleyan University study found that women who sniffed lavender oil before bed experienced, on average, 22 percent more restorative slow-wave sleep.



BREAK A SWEAT

Though exercisers and non-exercisers clock about the same amount of sleep each night, according to a 2013 National Sleep Foundation poll, those who worked out rated their sleep as significantly better. Even light exercisers were 43 percent more likely to get a good night's rest than those who were mostly sedentary.

GO MEDITERRANEAN

According to a study in the *European Respiratory Journal*, people with moderate to severe sleep apnea who followed a Mediterranean diet—high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fish—and walked at least 30 minutes a day for six

months experienced roughly 18 fewer episodes of obstructed breathing per hour of REM sleep.

Given that excess belly fat increases the risk of sleep apnea, researchers attribute their findings to the decrease in waist circumference that resulted from the regimen.



CHECK YOUR MEDS

You already know to avoid caffeine close to bedtime, but some painkillers contain enough of the stimulant to keep you up at night. And certain antidepressants increase the levels of serotonin and norepinephrine—two neurotransmitters that can suppress REM sleep. If you think your prescriptions are affecting your zzz's,

talk to your doctor about alternatives.

CHOOSE DINNER WISELY

A small study in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that adding food high on the glycemic index, like rice and potatoes, to your evening meal roughly four hours before bed could help you fall asleep 49 percent faster than a low-GI meal. High-GI foods increase the body's levels of the sleep-inducing amino acid tryptophan.

THE BEST POSITION

The winner? On your side. According to the Better Sleep Council, stomach sleepers are most likely to report restlessness, while some studies have shown that sleep apnea is worse for people who snooze on their back.

Research in the *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine* suggests that people who spend 20 to 80 percent of the night on their back could have four fewer events of obstructed breathing per hour by simply rolling onto their side.

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Photo: Collected

Do you beditate?

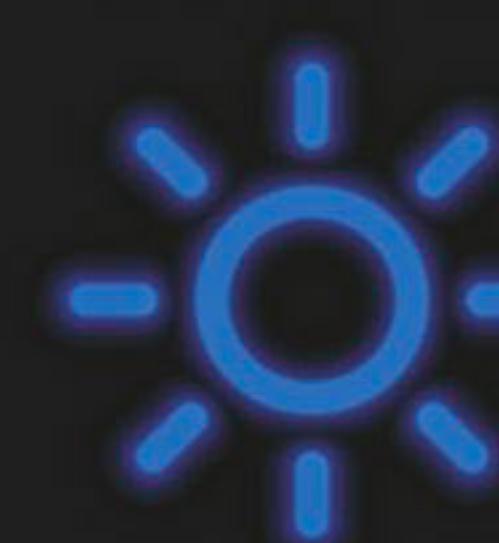
STEP 1



SELECT YOUR EVENING BEDITATION

This will play when you press the **Begin** button to relax you to sleep.

STEP 2



SELECT YOUR MORNING BEDITATION

This will play at the time of your **Alarm** to gently wake you up.

STEP 3



SELECT YOUR WAKE UP TIME

This is the time that your **Morning Beditation** will wake you up. Press **Begin** and close your eyes.

We have all heard of yoga, pilates and meditation, but how many of us have actually heard of the term Beditation? The term itself is a new word that people on the internet have invented, but the practice is not. In short, it is simply good old meditation before bed, to help us fall asleep quicker.

During meditation, experts advise against lying down, because doing so will make one fall asleep instead of actually meditating. However, for people who lack sleep, or have trouble sleeping, doing exactly that can help. Different people have different sleeping problems, but falling asleep in the first place seems to be a big barrier in itself, resulting in a lack of sleep. That is where Beditation comes in.

To beditate, lie down as you normally would to sleep. Then, slowly collect all your thoughts -- from the terrible day at work to the good news from your mom,

skim through all your thoughts and conversations. Alongside that, concentrate harder on finding your breath. Focus hard on the breath, while the thoughts of your day are nothing but side characters. By the time you will be focused enough, you

will not be able to think anymore, because you will be fast asleep.

There is no scientific evidence or calculation behind it, beditation is simply considered a trick that will help one fall asleep faster. That being said, when some-

one is meditating with other goals, it is best not to lie down, because as much as we love sleep, it will deviate the mind from the main reasons of meditation.

By Anisha Hassan

Photo: Collected