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4 Ways to Improve Sleep Without Meds

According to Consumer Reports, Americans are expected to be spending [\\$52 billion](#) a year in sleep remedies and medications by 2020. This reflects a nationwide sleep crisis, where more and more people are struggling to get the rest they need to function properly.

There are various reasons for this: higher stress, smartphones keeping us awake, and busy schedules that eat into our sleeping time. However, there are also various ways to fight back which, unlike pills, don't involve a [risk of addiction](#). Here are a few ways of them.

Keep Tech Out of the Bedroom

By now, you have probably heard of the infamous [blue light](#). It is the type of light emitted by most of our technology, such as TVs, laptops, tablets, and smartphones, and it tricks our brain into believing it's still daytime. This messes with our natural sleep cycle and could be depriving us of quality sleep — and that's ignoring the more tangible problem of addictive social media feeds and TV shows keeping us awake past our bedtimes.

One of the best things you can do for your sleep is to leave tech out of the bedroom. Charge your smartphone in another room and invest in old-fashioned alternatives to the apps you “need” at night such as an actual alarm clock and physical books (or an e-reader with the light off). It may be difficult at first, but your sleep is likely to improve significantly.

Create a Relaxing Nighttime Routine

It's difficult to fall asleep when you feel stressed or anxious. After all, stress is your body's fight-or-flight response, a state that does not easily lend itself to restfulness. This is why you should make a concerted effort to relax your mind and body before you get into bed.

Giving yourself time to “wind down” is also a [common technique](#) for people suffering from insomnia. Essentially, you are widening the window of time you give your body to understand

that it should start feeling sleepy. Have a hot bath, read a book, do some yoga, use some [relaxing aromatherapy](#) — anything that helps you wind down is a good idea.

Improve Your Home's Air Quality

Poor sleep can be caused by the most innocuous of things. Take, for example, your home's air. You probably rarely give it a second thought, but poor indoor air quality [has been linked](#) to poor sleep. This is especially the case for people who suffer from asthma or allergies, as indoor pollutants can irritate your nose, throat, and lungs, making sleep difficult and painful.

You can improve your home's air quality by cleaning regularly, opening windows daily, and regularly changing the filters in your furnace and/or AC. MERV 8 filters are particularly effective, [trapping 90 percent](#) of pollutants like mold, pollen, and dust mites.

Exercise Regularly

If someone told you that exercise helps you sleep better, you'd probably think that would make sense — you work out, you feel tired, you sleep better. However, the relationship between [sleep and exercise](#) is actually more complex than many people realize.

Research has shown that, in the short term, exercise does nothing to improve sleep. In other words, a strenuous workout today doesn't necessarily translate to a restful sleep tonight. However, long-term regular exercise does affect your stress response — it's the same reason exercise is often prescribed for anxiety. This allows you to feel more relaxed at night, and in the long run, it helps you sleep better because of that.

As you can see, our ability to sleep well is influenced by a host of complex factors, from the kind of light we are exposed to before bed to our stress levels and even the air around us. Therefore, it makes sense to tackle sleep problems from a more holistic perspective. By targeting the external influences that may be making it harder for us to sleep rather than immediately resorting to medication, we give our bodies a chance to fall asleep naturally without risking the side effects and complications that can arise from prescription pills.

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