

Better sleep during lockdown

Do you feel well-rested right now?

Most of us are at home right now so no hectic commutes, no big nights out, no dashing from appointment to appointment. We should be feeling more energised and rested, right?

So why all the social media posts about insomnia right now, where is this coming from?

While there are many reasons for sleeplessness, this piece is focusing on the changes to our sleep due to lockdown.

What lifestyle habits are impacting our sleep?

I previously talked about how our anxiety levels may be elevated right now, worrying about our current situation and the future. This was not a slow build anxiety that our body had time to adapt to and manage. It was pretty punch-in-the-face sudden for most of us. Working and socialising one day and the next day....tumbleweed.

Since then my lifestyle habits have definitely changed. I have to keep an eye on my diet and exercise did not help! Sugar, caffeine and excess carbs have crept in and, if I was not constantly in loungewear, I am sure I would notice it on my waistline as well as my energy levels. And since literally everything is online now I am spending WAY too much time looking at a screen.

What I have noticed is the mornings when I get up early and go for a long cycle, I feel so much more energised during the day and ready for bed at night.

A nutritious diet, exercise and reducing screen time will definitely help with insomnia but today I want to tell you more about the importance of natural sunlight.

Sunlight and sleep

As most of us are missing our daily commutes, lunchtime walks and weekend outings, our time spent in natural sunlight has drastically diminished.

Did you know that the exposure of our eyes and skin to natural sunlight during the day directly affects the quality of our sleep? Our eyes and skin receive signals from sunlight which naturally regulate our sleep-wake cycle and repeats roughly every 24 hours. This is known as our circadian rhythm.

Sunlight also improves our heart rate variability level (HRV) which is HRV is the most effective way of estimating how well you can cope with stressful situations. How quickly does your heart rate recover and bring you back to a state of calm?

You can read more about HRV and how to measure it here.

<https://ouraring.com/what-is-heart-rate-variability>

Enjoy a morning sunbathe

The main tip of this week for insomniacs is to spend regular time in the sunshine.

According to research, the best time of day to get maximum benefit of natural sunlight is in the morning although evening sunlight is also beneficial for a good night's sleep.

The recommendations I have found suggest that the most important aspects of light exposure for sleep are:

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/morning-sunlight-exposure-3973908>

Within an hour of waking

For at least 30 minutes

No sunglasses

Direct sunlight so not through glass

I am going to make sure that I spend part of every morning outside. I would love to hear if you try this too and what affect it has on your sleeping pattern.

I also recommend Yoga Nidra (Sleep Yoga) meditations for sleep and general relaxation. I like to do them during the day to recharge but you can also practice them just before bedtime.

The Insight Timer app is a great resource for free Yoga Nidra meditations.

<https://insighttimer.com/meditation-topics/yoganidra>

Have a great week with sweet dreams,

Sara