

Restore your sleep from the root

A functional medicine guide to better sleep

Poor sleep is a signal worth understanding, not a diagnosis on its own. Start with the daily rhythms that help your body recognise when to wake and when to rest.

This guide covers possible contributors, practical sleep habits, lifestyle foundations and supplements to discuss with your practitioner, followed by a 4-week reset.

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Poor sleep is a signal, so look upstream

Functional medicine asks why sleep breaks down. These are possible contributors to explore, rather than causes to assume.

7 to 9

Hours of restful sleep most adults need each night. Women need more than men.

70 million

Up to this many US adults live with a sleep disorder.

Four common contributors to consider

Circadian disruption

Your internal body clock can drift when light exposure and sleep timing vary.

Evening stress signals

Cortisol, a hormone involved in alertness, may stay elevated when you need to unwind.

Blood sugar dips

Overnight changes in blood sugar may contribute to waking in some people.

Nutrient status

Low magnesium or other nutrient gaps may warrant a closer look.

Short sleep is linked with higher risk for several health conditions. A fuller assessment may also consider inflammation, gut health and your overall stress load.

Sleep hygiene that sets your body clock

Give your body clear, repeatable cues for daytime alertness and nighttime rest.

MORNING

Anchor the day with light

- Get bright outdoor light within an hour of waking.
- Keep a consistent wake time, even on weekends.

AFTERNOON & DINNER

Leave room for sleep

- Stop caffeine by early afternoon.
- Limit alcohol, which can fragment sleep even if it makes you feel drowsy.
- Finish dinner 2 to 3 hours before bed.

EVENING & BEDROOM

Make rest the default

- Avoid screens and LED lights for the hour before bed and dim the room instead.
  - Blue light suppresses melatonin, delays your body clock, and makes it harder to fall asleep and reduces sleep quality.
- Keep the bedroom cool, dark and quiet.
- Keep the bed for sleep, with no work or scrolling.

Start with the cue you can repeat most reliably. Consistency gives your body clock a clearer signal than an occasional perfect evening.

Lifestyle foundations that support deep sleep

What happens during the day helps shape how easily you settle at night.

Build balanced meals

Include protein and fiber at every meal to support steadier blood sugar. Avoid late sugary snacks.

Move every day

Choose movement you can sustain. Finish intense workouts a few hours before bed so there is time to settle.

Practice winding down

Try breathwork, gentle stretching, journaling or a warm bath. Choose a routine that feels restful rather than demanding.

Pause before evening

Take short daytime breaks to reduce accumulated stress and support the normal evening drop in alertness.

Food can play a supporting role

Kiwifruit and tart cherry have been studied for sleep support. Treat them as optional foods within a balanced diet, rather than a remedy you must add.

Supplements to consider, with your practitioner

Magnesium (glycinate)

Calming mineral; among the most studied.

Melatonin

Best for circadian shifts such as jet lag or shift work; low doses, short term.

L-theanine

Promotes relaxation without sedation; trials used 50 to 900 mg per day.

Glycine, apigenin, ashwagandha

Emerging options reviewed as adjuncts to good sleep habits.

Evidence varies, so test and tailor rather than stack; check interactions with medications.

Your 4-week sleep reset

Build one layer each week, keeping the habits that came before it.

Week 1

Fix your morning anchors

Get outdoor light within an hour of waking and keep a consistent wake time, including weekends.

Week 2

Protect the evening

Start a calming wind-down and a screen curfew. Dim lights 60 to 90 minutes before bed.

Week 3

Review food and caffeine timing

Balance dinner with protein and fiber, finish it 2 to 3 hours before bed, and stop caffeine by early afternoon.

Week 4

Evaluate before adding

If needed, discuss one targeted supplement with your practitioner. Track sleep timing, awakenings and daytime energy.

This guide is educational and not medical advice. Talk to your healthcare provider, especially if you take medications or snore heavily. Persistent sleep problems deserve assessment; a reset does not replace treatment.

Let's find your root cause

Bring your sleep patterns, questions and what you have already tried. They can help guide a more focused conversation.

Notice the pattern

Is falling asleep difficult, or do you wake during the night? Note your wake time, evening routine and how you feel the next day.

Bring the full picture

Include caffeine and alcohol habits, meal timing, stress, medications and supplements. Mention heavy snoring or breathing pauses to your healthcare provider.

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Start a conversation

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