

31 Ways to Fight Weight-Gaining Insomnia

Written by arizona Foothills Magazine

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It's bad enough when you lie awake at night, painfully aware of the sleepless minutes ticking past. But insomnia, which affects 1/3 of the world's adults and twice as many women as men, becomes even more troublesome when you consider the side effects.



In 2005 the journal "Sleep" published a study comparing two groups of people -- those who slept 7 to 9 hours nightly, and those who slept around 6 hours. The second group was 27% more likely to be overweight.

"Lack of sleep can affect your blood sugar, your hunger hormones, and even the rate at which you burn calories throughout the day," personal trainer Jessica Smith Gomez told Prevention. That's because, according to American Academy of Sleep Medicine fellow Dr. Michael Breus, your hormone levels are affected by sleep.

Ghrelin Says "Eat," Leptin Says "Stop"

"When you don't get enough sleep, it drives leptin levels down, which means you don't feel as satisfied after you eat," he told WebMD. "Lack of sleep also causes ghrelin levels to rise, which means your appetite is stimulated, so you want more food." And the drawbacks don't stop there.

"If you are sleep-deprived," Breus warns, "meaning that you are not getting enough minutes of sleep or good quality sleep, your metabolism will not function properly." A slower metabolism makes it even harder to burn calories, which is a perfect setup for weight gain.

Sleeping more than 7.5 hours nightly won't help you lose weight, but increasing from 6 to 8 hours will make a difference. The only problem is that deciding to sleep longer isn't always enough to keep you slumbering blissfully all night long.

How Can You Get More Sleep?

Everyone develops their own favorite methods, and sometimes trying a new idea (or several) can help. See which of these sound like they might work for you:

Set Your Schedule

- * Regular hours: go to bed and get up at approximately the same time, even on weekends
- * Don't take naps: but if you do, keep them under 30 minutes and before mid-afternoon
- * Avoid eating late: snacks are fine, but a big dinner will keep you awake
- * Get up earlier: if you couldn't sleep the night before, rising earlier can re-set your clock

Set The Scene

- * Well-ventilated room with firm bed: both are crucial to good sleep
- * No clocks: if you need an alarm clock, turn it away from view so you won't keep watching
- * Position your bed: sleeping with your head facing north sometimes works better
- * Official sleep area: don't use your bed to watch TV, just sleep

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- * White noise maker: a gentle hum can help block out distracting sounds

During The Day

- * Food allergies: rule out possible insomnia culprits by eliminating & re-trying one at a time
- * Caffeine, alcohol, nicotine: if you can't skip them altogether, avoid them after 4pm
- * [Massage therapy](#): achieving total relaxation helps you re-create the same sensation at home
- * Reduce stress: talk it out, work it out, play it out, meditate, pray, or whatever works for you
- * Physical exercise: add some to each day's routine, at least three hours before bedtime

Before Bed

- * Warm bath: make sure you don't bathe too long, or you'll feel exhausted rather than relaxed
- * Herbs & minerals: valerian is a natural sedative, and magnesium can sometimes help
- * No stimulation: avoid late-night TV, reading or talk that will leave you invigorated
- * Beverages: try the classic warm milk or herbal tea (especially chamomile or anise)
- * OTC sleep aids: check for allergy pills or cold medicine that indicates nighttime use

Drifting Off

- * Deep breathing: relax as you feel your heart rate and energy level slowing down
- * Watch a hypnotic video: drifting clouds, a cozy fireplace, or whatever seems tranquil
- * Don't sleep on your stomach: it's hard to get comfortable, so you'll toss and turn
- * Relaxing music: choose what will help you zone out (and end after you've fallen asleep)

Use Your Mind

- * Repeat a mantra: any word or phrase that distracts you from restless thinking
- * Visualize: either a peaceful scene or a boring scene can help you fall asleep
- * Imagine it's time to get up: knowing you can stay in bed provides sweet relief
- * Count backwards: start from 1000 to divert your attention from distracting thoughts

Use Your Body

- * Curl your toes: doing this repeatedly can help you relax and drift off
- * A small weight on your body: sounds odd, but this may boost "relaxing" serotonin
- * Yawn: a great way to automatically trigger the deep breathing reflex
- * Progressive relaxation: your jaw, neck, shoulders, arms, chest, core, legs and feet

What Have You Tried?

Since everyone finds different levels of success with various techniques for getting enough sleep, these 31 are only the beginning. You've probably tried some others as well.

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Share what's worked for you at any point during your life, even if it no longer works, because your suggestions might be exactly what will help someone else get a good night's sleep!

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master's in counseling and 11 years as a therapist, she focuses on issues that affect daily life for people who want

to improve their overall health. Take some time to commit to a better balance of health and wellness by scheduling

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a facial or massage at one of the [Phoenix Massage Envy](#) area clinics.]