



Six Things You May Not Know about Sleep

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Trouble sleeping? You are not alone. According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, each night millions of Americans struggle to fall asleep or stay asleep. At some point, many adults experience short-term (acute) insomnia which can last for several days or weeks. But some people have long-term (chronic) insomnia that lasts for a month or more -- about 10% of U.S. adults. Either variety can have a negative impact on quality of life and performance throughout the day.

It is important to determine what factors may be causing your insomnia. Many cases of insomnia are a result of stress, or other emotional or physical condition that needs separate treatment. Often, sleep patterns return to normal when these conditions are successfully treated.

Here are six surprising sleep inhibitors that may be affecting your sleep.

1. Energy-efficient light bulbs

These energy savers give off far more “blue light” than conventional Thomas Edison-type incandescent bulbs. And blue light is probably one of the biggest causes of insomnia. Here’s an easy fix: screw one of the old-fashioned bulbs into your bedside table lamp.

2. Orange soda

Everyone knows colas contain caffeine. Some folks know that most root beers and even cream sodas do too. But orange soda? Turns out that Sunkist Orange Soda contains more caffeine than Coke. Along with more sugar too. A study published in the Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine found that 400 milligrams (mg) of caffeine taken six

hours before bedtime can significantly disrupt your sleep. For reference, an 8-ounce cup of coffee has 95 to 200 mg of caffeine. The researchers recommend avoiding caffeine a minimum of six hours before your normal bedtime. Drinking too much of any fluid before bedtime can disrupt sleep with repeated nighttime trips to the bathroom.

Here is a list of all popular beverages containing caffeine, including some you wouldn't expect.

3. Over-the-counter headache relievers like Extra-Strength Excedrin

The irony is that caffeine is suspected as a migraine trigger. So, the last thing you'd expect a headache remedy to contain would be caffeine. And yet it does. Some (but not all) medications labeled "non-drowsy" also contain caffeine. And while we're on the subject of surprising sources of caffeine, let's add breath mints, decaffeinated coffee, and any product that contains the word "energy."

4. Your cellphone has a setting that filters out blue light

On iPhones, this setting is called Night Shift and on Androids it's Night Mode. You can preset it to automatically turn on and off each day. It is recommended that you set it to switch off the blue light about 1-2 hours before bedtime. iPads have these settings too.

5. Melatonin

Of all the "natural" sleep aids that have been claimed to aid sleep, melatonin is the only one with fairly solid science behind it. The effect is modest – a few minutes a night – but that's more of an effect than any other natural sleep aid can credibly claim.

It doesn't work for everyone, but it's worth a try. It doesn't take much melatonin to fall asleep, so if 1 to 3 milligrams an hour before bed isn't doing it for you, doubling the dose won't help.

One thing is fairly clear: melatonin helps you reset your body clock when you cross time zones.

6. Alcohol

It helps you get to sleep but doesn't help you stay asleep. It disrupts your entire sleep cycle so that you often wake up in the middle of the night and can't get back to sleep. Long-term heavy drinking can also trigger high blood pressure, heart failure, and stroke.

