

## “Help me to wake up happy!”

A whopping 63% of us have trouble falling or staying asleep. To the rescue: Our experts help you get the restorative Zzzs you need to wake up energized

### Quiet a restless mind

#### Take balanced breaths

A simple breathing technique can reduce fitful sleep by almost 50%, thanks to its increasing soothing alpha brain waves, studies show.

“Try alternate-nostril breathing,” urges psychologist Seth J. Gillihan, Ph.D. “When we breathe from the right nostril, we engage the left hemisphere of the brain, and the reverse is true when we inhale from the left nostril, ‘balancing’ the hemispheres and triggering a deeper relaxation response.” To do: Cover your right nostril with your thumb and inhale through your left nostril while slowly counting to four; hold for four beats and exhale through your mouth for four; alternate breathing through each nostril for three minutes, 30 minutes before bed.

### Focus on comforts

“Any trick we use to get to sleep, like counting sheep, can lead to anxiety about whether it’s working,” says Gillihan. “It’s much more effective to focus on the present moment.” How? With a “bedtime meditation,”

he recommends. “Simply notice how your head feels against the pillow; the soft sheets on your skin and the weight of the warm blanket.” Why it works: Focusing on the soothing sensation of soft fabrics triggers the release of calming oxytocin, promoting deeper sleep.

### Sleep on this side

The position that’ll help you wake up happier? “Sleeping on your right side activates your vagus nerve, which signals your brain to make calming chemicals,” says women’s health expert Sara Gottfried, M.D. “Keeping your vagus nerve ‘toned’ promotes better mood and higher energy levels.”



### Soothe bodily tensions

#### Enjoy a hot bath

Taking a hot bath one to two hours before bedtime is linked with deeper sleep, reveals sleep medicine expert Lawrence J. Epstein, M.D. “When we dry off, our body triggers a



cooling effect that significantly decreases the time it takes to fall asleep,” he explains. “And we know that when your *brain* is cooler, you sleep better.”

### Curb the urge to “go”

Stress ups middle-of-the-night bathroom urgency by producing hormones that suppress bladder control. But you can sidestep this issue with a delicious dinner fix: a Waldorf salad! “Leafy greens and nuts are rich in magnesium, which cuts cortisol levels and reduces inflammation, helping soothe aches that may be keeping you up,” explains Dr. Gottfried. A fiber-rich salad also lowers your chances of being woken up by preventing the constipation that puts added pressure on your bladder.

### Stop night sweats

Hormonal upheaval triggers disruptive night sweats in 75% of women during perimenopause and menopause. Luckily, there’s an herb proven to curb these temperature swings, says Dr. Gottfried. “My favorite treatment for night sweats is Siberian rhubarb,” she declares. It’s been shown to alleviate the symptoms of menopause that trigger sleep disruptions as effectively as low-dose estrogen treatments. In fact, one study found that women who took 4 mg. of the herb for 12 weeks saw their night sweats cut nearly in *half*. One option: Life Extension Menopause 731 Siberian Rhubarb Extract 4 mg. (LEF.com/ww). Note: Check with your doctor before taking supplements.

## Our expert panel



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