



THE DOCTOR'S KITCHEN

# Sleep Hacks

Sleep is one of the least recognised causes of ill health. Chronic sleep deprivation can have a role in mood disorders, over eating and digestion issues. Losing as little as an hour of sleep per night can have detrimental effects and it's crucial that we recognise its importance to our daily lives. Treat your bodies need to rest as you would treat the need to nourish it with food.

Unfortunately for many of us, myself included, it slips down the list of priorities all too often. We have deadlines to hit, parties to attend and if we can function on less sleep it's almost like a badge of honour.

There are many changes that occur during sleep that repair our bodies and improve its ability to function the next day and years into the future. Hormones are secreted during sleep that clear damaged cells and prevent inflammation as well as a multitude of physiological changes that are protective.

Here are some tips for getting this most important shut eye whilst juggling a hectic lifestyle



THE DOCTOR'S KITCHEN

# 5 Sleep Hacks

**Electronic Detox.** Putting laptops, TVs and phones away 2 hours before bed is critical. The blue light emitted from these devices inhibits a hormone crucial to sleep and has a role in many other functions including reducing inflammation and maintaining immunity. A helpful app to use on your computer is called fluxxx, that removes the blue light but don't rely on this. The process of working late can busy your mind so I would suggest this when you really have to use it!

**Darkness.** Artificial is a very new phenomenon that our bodies are getting used to. Prior to electricity we would only move around or do most of our activities in day light hours and our bodies sleeping process is optimised in complete darkness. I find black out curtains and ear plugs help remove sensory stimulation that can disturb sleep. Definitely worth a try.

**Eat earlier in the evening.** Preferably 2-3 hours before bed. I recently did a podcast with Sleep Medicine expert Dr Farquar from the London Evelina Children's hospital where we discussed the hormonal effects of eating late in the evenings. By spiking sugars late at night it can affect the other hormones that govern sleep, so in general try not to snack late at night.

**Get some light in the morning.** Preparing yourself for a great nights sleep .. starts in the morning. Maintaining your sleep cycle relies on getting adequate amounts of exposure to sunlight during daylight hours. It may take some time to readjust your body clock and everyone's different, but a nice exercise is to have a cup of tea or hot water in the mornings outside and immerse yourself in the morning light (if it's summer!).

**Box breathing,** gratitude and meditation exercises. I've done a personal gratitude exercise for years now and I find it helps relieve stressors that have accumulated during the day which I can ruminate over and affect sleep. It reminds me of the bigger picture and allows me to refocus my attention. Box Breathing is a technique where you take a slow deep breath in and hold for 5 seconds, gently expire fully and hold again for 5 seconds, and repeat. I do this for about 2-3 minutes and it induces a calmer state and activates the parasympathetic nervous system reducing your heart rate. It's a nice way to relax in the evenings.



THE DOCTOR'S KITCHEN

# Sleep Hacks

If you found this tips on how to improve sleep useful and want more information you'll love some of the other blog posts and podcasts I've created to help you live healthier happier lives.

[Check them out at thedoctorskitchen.com/podcast](https://thedoctorskitchen.com/podcast)

I teach you how to recipe create yourself, the fundamentals of mindfulness and how both exercise and sleep can be medicinal using the scientific research. It's full of practical tips and tricks to get you feeling healthier and living well.

You can find out more about what the course involves [here](#).