

This was developed by a doctor in Chicago. It is a type of **stimulus-control therapy**.

The basic steps are:

Go to bed only when you are sleepy

Use the bed only for sleeping

If you are unable to sleep, get up and do something else; return only when you are sleepy; if you still cannot sleep, get up again. The goal is to associate bed with sleeping rather than with frustration. Repeat as often as necessary throughout the night.

Set the alarm and get up at the same time every morning, regardless of how much or how little sleep you've had.

Do not nap during the day.

As you can see, some of this advice is different from that of Hauri.

However, the Bootzin technique has been assessed in over 30 studies and found to be as good as or better than a variety of other techniques.

**The following simple tips** are sensible ones to try. They will not help everyone - we are all individuals - but they may be what your body has been looking for!

**Drink warm milk** before going to bed: it contains calcium which is known to have a calming effect on the central nervous system. A supplement may also be helpful - 500mg calcium in a preparation also containing magnesium and potassium to aid absorption: magnesium is also a natural sedative. 250-300 mg a day can be helpful, and may also combat fatigue. Proportions should be 2 parts calcium to one of magnesium.

**Drink herb tea:** chamomile is widely available. Herbal tablets that can be bought from health food shops and some chemists often include **valerian**, which is calmativ (and can also help combat nerve twitches and shooting pains)

**gentian**

(the root has been used in Europe for hundreds of years as a sleeping aid) and

**hops**

. (Alternatively, a hop pillow also containing lavender and chamomile can be used). Other commonly used herbs include passion flower (passiflora) and Californian poppy (Escholtzschia californica).

**Lavender essential oil** used in massage or in the bath is soothing and helps muscles to relax. NOTE: If using herbs, beware of interactions with prescribed medication.

**Eat a bedtime snack:** avoid a heavy evening meal, but try a complex carbohydrate snack, say crackers with butter. Foods that contain tryptophan (an amino acid) may be helpful, e.g. meat, fish, poultry, eggs, beans, peanuts, cheese, leafy green vegetables.

However, eating cheese is not recommended before bedtime as it does contain some 'rogue neurotransmitters' which is why it is associated with vivid dreams. Tryptophan used to be available to buy as a supplement in the United States, but due to problems (strange symptoms) probably relating to a single source of certain contaminated batches, it was pulled off the market.

**Avoid caffeine, alcohol and tobacco:** studies have shown that 13% of people use alcohol as a sleep aid. However, it is far from effective. It may help you to drop off to sleep, but later it will

disturb your sleep. Caffeine is an obvious stimulant and is best avoided after lunch, or the latest, after 6 pm.

Don't forget that not only coffee, but also tea, chocolate and coca cola are all sources of caffeine as are some cold remedies and over-the-counter diuretics (water tablets).

Cigarettes raise blood pressure, speed up the heart rate and stimulate brain wave activity. Smokers may also wake up more in the middle of the night, possibly because they are experiencing withdrawal symptoms.

**Avoid too much fluid intake in the evening** to avoid having to get up to empty the bladder.

**Take vitamin B supplements:** they regulate tryptophan and other amino-acids and are used up by stress, smoking and alcohol. (also contraceptive pill). 50-100mg a day B3 (niacin) often helps people with depression along with insomnia. Niacin appears to prolong REM sleep and decreases the awake time. B12 is also helpful; a 3,000 mcg dose seems to enable people to drift off to sleep more easily and to remain asleep for longer.

Folic acid has been reported to relieve insomnia related to folate deficiency (dose 2-5 mg per day). Dr. Atkins, in his book Vita-Nutrient Solution, recommends ensuring that any use of B vitamins is balanced; i.e. not to use just B12, but preferably a Complex formula. He suggests that Inositol (a relative of the B complex) relaxes nervous tension thereby encouraging sound sleep.

He also says that this supplement is helpful in diabetic neuropathy and in depression and anxiety. He recommends doses of 500mg to 1.5g at bedtime for insomnia.

*NOTE:* in some people the B vitamins can cause overstimulation and sleeplessness.

**Sleep in a well-ventilated room at about 60-65 °F** : too warm and you'll feel unpleasantly hot

- use more covers if you are cold. Avoid central heating being on all night because it tends to dry out the airways (may have an impact on snoring etc) which means you are likely to have a *really* dry mouth the next day!

**Try to take some exercise** if possible: regular exercise in the late afternoon may deepen sleep, although vigorous exercise within 3-4 hours of bedtime may interfere with sleep.

Obviously it is not feasible to exercise in the way healthy folk might be able to, but even if mild exercise causes increased pain and fatigue it is important to try to do as much as possible, say walking around the outside of the house.

If this is too much, try walking halfway initially. Then gradually increase it. You will find that bit by bit you can do more and that you feel more energised rather than less.

Try bright light (see below)