

# Detox in Your Sleep with Proper Sleep Hygiene

Have you ever wondered why you feel terrible the next day when you sleep poorly the night before? Or why the same people who develop sleep issues as they age tend to be more susceptible to progressive brain disorders, such as dementia? Evidence is beginning to suggest a possible connection between poor sleep and brain health. When you're unable to sleep soundly on a regular basis, your brain may be unable to fully detoxify itself.



*(Photo by Dane Deaner on Unsplash)*

New research shows how the depth of your sleep can impact your

brain's ability to efficiently flush waste and toxic proteins. Because sleep often becomes increasingly lighter and more disrupted as we age, the study – co-authored by the co-director of the [Center for Translational Neuromedicine](#) at the University of Rochester Medical Center, along with Danish and Finnish researchers – reinforces and potentially explains the links between aging, sleep deprivation, and heightened risk for irreversible and progressive brain disorders such as Alzheimer's disease.

The study, [Increased glymphatic influx is correlated with high EEG delta power and low heart rate in mice under anesthesia](#), appears in the February 1, 2019 edition of the journal [Science Advances](#), and indicates that slow and steady brain and cardiopulmonary activity associated with deep non-REM sleep are optimal for the function of the glymphatic system, the brain's unique pathway for removing waste.

If you're a patient of ours, you've likely heard us preach about the brain-gut connection. For example, when your [gut microbiota](#) is imbalanced, we can see not only digestive disorders but also autoimmunity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and (this is important in regard to today's post) unhealthy expression of hormones and brain chemicals leading to mood disorders, depression, and anxiety.

Sleep, as it turns out, may truly be your best friend.

To be successful with any plan of care – regardless of it being one we prescribe one offered by another [functional medicine practice in Tampa](#), you must sleep well. In this post, we provide guidance on how to improve both the quantity and quality of your sleep.

***Why We Don't Sleep Well***

Taking a step back for a moment, it's important to understand why you may not be getting the seven to 10 hours of quality sleep per night that we recommend for nearly everyone under our care. Whether you have difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or feeling rested after a full night's sleep, you need to identify and address any and all underlying causes of poor sleep as part of any treatment plan to restore optimal health.

One of the primary reasons we don't sleep well is due to poor *sleep hygiene*— habits and practices that are conducive to sleeping. We stay up late watching TV, playing video games, or engaging on social media; we consume caffeine, nicotine, or alcohol too close to bedtime; we exercise too late in the day; and so on.

A wide range of health conditions can also keep us up at night, including the following:

- Pain
- Stress
- Sleep apnea
- Low serotonin
- Chronic infection
- [Hormone imbalance](#)
- Low vitamin B status
- Chronic inflammation
- Poor blood sugar balance
- Prostate or bladder issues
- Low or elevated histamine
- [Leaky gut and intestinal permeability](#)
- Genetic predisposition to elevated glutamate

As we age, we become susceptible to any number of health issues, including the ones listed above. In some cases, poor sleep may cause or exacerbate these conditions, leading to a downward spiral – the condition causes poor sleep, which makes it worse,

further disturbing your sleep, and so on.

### ***When Issues with Your Bladder Cause You to Lose Sleep***

Because it may occur once or twice per night, waking up at night to use the bathroom may be perceived as normal. But as it turns out, unless you have a bladder or prostate problem, your body shouldn't need to wake itself up at any point during your sleep. And if you do wake up to urinate, you should be able to fall back to sleep quickly.

If you're waking up during the night to use the bathroom, especially if you're waking up more than once or having trouble getting back to sleep afterwards, work with your doctor to figure out why and address the cause. Underlying causes can be broken down into the following categories:

- Bladder or prostate issues
- Drinking too much of any fluids too close to bedtime
- Consuming stimulants or alcohol too close to bedtime or consuming too much of a stimulant or alcohol earlier in the day
- Inability to sleep deeply enough to prevent a normal amount of urine in your bladder from waking you

### ***Practicing Healthy Sleep Hygiene***

Before trying more drastic measures to improve sleep, your doctor should work with you to address the basics by setting the stage for a good night's sleep through healthy sleep hygiene. We recommend the following (from the National Sleep Foundation, with some adjustments):

- Limit daytime naps to 30 minutes.
- Avoid stimulants, such as caffeine and nicotine, close to bedtime.
- Drink alcohol in moderation, if at all. While alcohol may

help you fall asleep, it can disrupt sleep later in the night and create a need to wake up to use the bathroom.

- Engage in at least 10 minutes of aerobic exercise daily, such as walking or cycling, but *not* close to bedtime.
- Avoid heavy meals or any foods or beverages that may cause indigestion when consumed too close to bedtime.
- As much as possible, align your exposure to natural light to the cycle of sunrise and sunset. Avoid exposure to light, especially blue light from TV screens and digital devices, at least one hour before bedtime.
- Establish a sleep routine. Try going to bed at the same time every night and waking up at the same time every day, so you're scheduled to get seven to 10 hours of sleep per night.
- Relax before bed. Taking a warm shower or bath, reading a relaxing book or magazine (not on a computer screen), listening to relaxing music, engaging in some light stretching, and so on, may help. Avoid emotional interactions and anything else that might rev your engine. Sex before sleep is fine if it helps.
- Maintain a comfortable sleep environment. A comfortable mattress and pillows are the bare essentials. The room should be pitch dark and silent (white noise is okay if helpful) and between 60 and 67 degrees for optimal sleep.

### ***Additional Tips for Improving Sleep***

To maintain restful sleep, doing one thing is usually not enough. Taking multiple steps to ensure restful sleep is a more effective long-term solution. If you're practicing healthy sleep hygiene and still having trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or feeling rested after a full night's sleep, we have some additional suggestions that may help.

**Try a Sleep Supplement:** At BioDesign Wellness, we've seen

extraordinary results in helping patients achieve seven to 10 solid hours of sleep by taking a fatty acid called *phosphatidylserine*, which research shows positively impacts cortisol levels and circadian rhythm (sleep/wake cycle). Available in both a cream and capsule, supplements containing phosphatidylserine as its key ingredient tend to balance elevated cortisol levels, create more energy, reduce hot flashes, and provide a feeling of well-being and calmness. Another option if you're having trouble falling asleep is melatonin. Ask your doctor which is right for you.

**Maintain Balanced Blood Sugar:** For restful, restorative sleep, blood sugar must be balanced throughout the day, week, month, and year. But how do you know if your sugar is balanced? First, don't mistakenly think your blood sugar is balanced because you don't have diabetes, or your blood tests are normal. Your blood glucose level, when tested, is a one-shot deal and is only a snapshot of that moment. It's not indicative of what is happening over the course of the day, week, or month.

Sleeping soundly is a good indicator of balanced blood sugar. If you find you're not sleeping well, we need to review your diet. Are you eating too many sugars? Bread, pasta, rice? Drinking alcohol? Not eating enough? You may also be hypoglycemic, which impacts nighttime blood sugar.

**Manage Stress:** Stress is an obvious reason why we don't sleep well. Feeling worried, fearful, or overwhelmed can quite literally keep us awake at night. Stress will also have a negative impact on your blood sugar, causing either elevated or low blood sugar due to the over secretion of cortisol (your stress hormone). If you are experiencing stress, increased amounts of gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) – a naturally occurring neurotransmitter that blocks impulses between nerve cells in the brain – may help to alleviate the impact of stress

on your body. Available in supplement form, GABA may help to make you feel calmer and rest easier. The edge will be taken off. Of course, when you balance blood sugar with diet, your results will also improve dramatically.

### ***Address Other Underlying Health Conditions***

As we mentioned earlier in this post, a number of health conditions may impact and be impacted by the amount and quality of sleep you're getting. In addition to stress and imbalanced blood sugar, be sure any other underlying health conditions are addressed, including pain, sleep apnea, low vitamin B, prostate or bladder issues, and chronic inflammation.

At BioDesign Wellness, we are committed to restoring and maintaining whole, optimal health. That journey is different for every patient we see. It may need to start with restoring restive sleep or addressing other underlying health issues that may be disturbing sleep, but ultimately the journey involves addressing every underlying issue getting in the way of you feeling and functioning your very best . . . and getting a good night's sleep.

=====

**Disclaimer:** *The information in this blog post about sleep hygiene, is provided for general informational purposes only and may not reflect current medical thinking or practices. No information contained in this post should be construed as medical advice from the medical staff at BioDesign Wellness Center, Inc., nor is this post intended to be a substitute for medical counsel on any subject matter. No reader of this post should act or refrain from acting on the basis of any information included in, or accessible through, this post without seeking the appropriate medical advice on the particular facts and circumstances at issue from a licensed medical*

*professional in the recipient's state, country or other appropriate licensing jurisdiction.*