



MEMBER UPDATE

ReFresh

November 3, 2021



This week...

Release for Better Sleep

Sleep is critical to our overall health and well-being. During sleep:

- Hormones flood our body to help heal and restore it
- Our brain sorts and processes the day's information
- Our sympathetic nervous system relaxes
- Cortisol levels drop
- Our immune systems release inflammation-fighting proteins, particularly important when our body is fighting inflammation, infection, and trauma.

Regular poor sleep puts you at risk of serious medical conditions such as obesity, coronary heart disease, diabetes, and a weakened immune system. Overall, poor sleep shortens your life expectancy.

One good way to improve your sleep is to practice a regular bedtime routine. A gradual wind down of the physical and mental activities of the day into a quiet calming mode before you drift off to dreamland.

Give it a go!

We invite you to add the following to your bedtime routine (after you have shut off all your electronics, brushed your teeth, and dimmed the lights):

1. Stretches to ease the tension you hold all day in your musculoskeletal system – [print this poster!](#)
2. A short session of deep breathing
3. Meditation to help calm your mind

Try this 5 – 10 minute, pre-bed meditation routine:

- Sit cross-legged on the floor or lie comfortably
- Breathe deeply five times: in through the nose, and out through the mouth
- Think of three things you're grateful for today (this is a great technique to improve your mood)
- Tell yourself that the day is over now. Forgive yourself for any mistakes, bad thoughts, or 'failings'. Forgive others, and tell yourself that it's all in the past
- Breathe deeply a few more times, mentally following your breath out of your mouth, into the room, and beyond (this exercise invites stressful thoughts to leave your head following that breath)

While researching this week's ReFresh, I found [this website](#) that outlines a similar 5-10 minute evening routine that includes a little stretching, breathing, and meditation.

Want to learn more?

Below there are videos and tutorials on stretching, deep breathing, and meditation. Try including these steps in your bedtime routine to see if it helps the quality of your sleep.

Stretching

For many of you, evenings can be busy times; I find I long for bed as soon as dinner is over! To add stretching to my night routine – well – sounds like a stretch! Therefore, here are three stretch videos you can follow depending on the time you want to dedicate:

Short (3.5 min)

Medium (14 min)

Long (28 min)

**Fitness Blender has some great workout and cool down videos – check them out!*

Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is an excellent way of transitioning from your day and preparing yourself for sleep. You can practice breathing on its own, or in combination with mindfulness or meditation. Deep breathing readies you for sleep by:

- Relaxing your muscles
- Slowing your heart rate
- Slowing down your breathing if anxiety is present
- Taking away your attention away from worrying thoughts

One breathing exercise often recommended for sleep is the 4-7-8 technique. To practice 4-7-8 breathing for sleep, lie down comfortably on your bed. Rest the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth, right behind your top front teeth, keeping it there throughout the practice.

The following steps should all be carried out in the cycle of one breath:

1. First, let your lips part. Make a whooshing sound and exhaling completely through your mouth over the course of eight seconds.
2. Next, close your lips, inhaling silently through your nose as you count to four in your head.
3. Then, for seven seconds, hold your breath.
4. Make another whooshing exhale from your mouth for eight seconds.

When you inhale again, you initiate a new cycle of breath. Practice this pattern for four full breaths.

Meditation

There are many meditation videos of varying lengths on YouTube that can guide you to sleep. Here is one that is 30 minutes – however, if you have stretched, done your breathing, and started to listen to **this meditation**, you will likely be asleep long before the 30 minutes is up!

Time for bed

By repeating a regular pattern, you can slowly but surely train your body and mind to unwind and prepare for bed. May this regular bedtime practice reveal how much better life is when you sleep well!

Sources

Casper | [**11 Effective Bedtime Routines for Adults**](#)

No Sleepless Nights | [**A Bedtime Routine For Adults: 10 Calming Activities**](#)

HSS | [**10 Stretches to Do Before Bed to Improve Your Sleep**](#)

Queensland Government | [**7 Amazing Things That Happen To Your Body While You Sleep**](#)