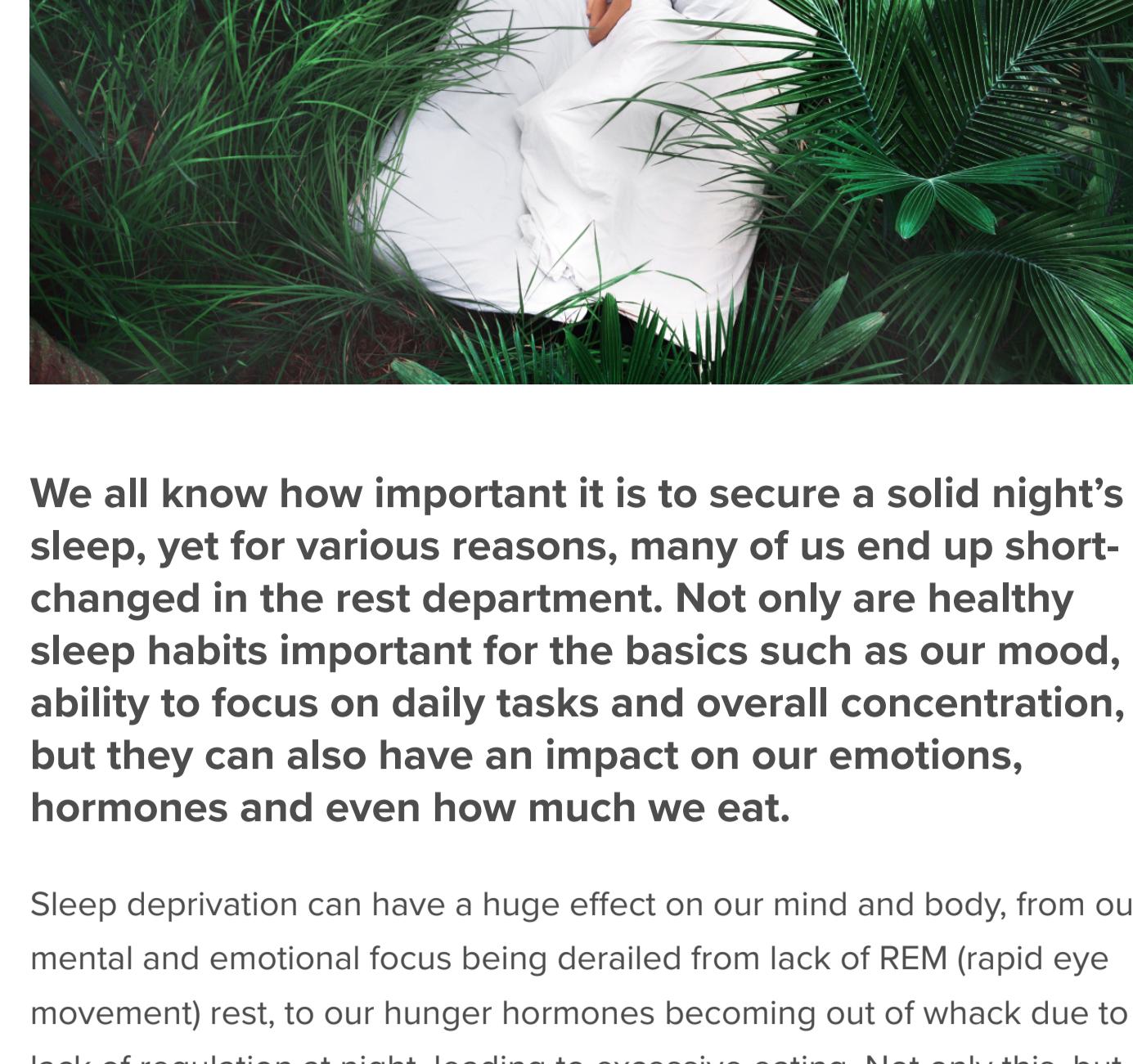


# 9 tips to improve your sleep

Tictac | Sep 7, 2021



We all know how important it is to secure a solid night's sleep, yet for various reasons, many of us end up short-changed in the rest department. Not only are healthy sleep habits important for the basics such as our mood, ability to focus on daily tasks and overall concentration, but they can also have an impact on our emotions, hormones and even how much we eat.

Sleep deprivation can have a huge effect on our mind and body, from our mental and emotional focus being derailed from lack of REM (rapid eye movement) rest, to our hunger hormones becoming out of whack due to lack of regulation at night, leading to excessive eating. Not only this, but sleeping less than seven hours a night has been associated with diabetes, high blood pressure and even depression.

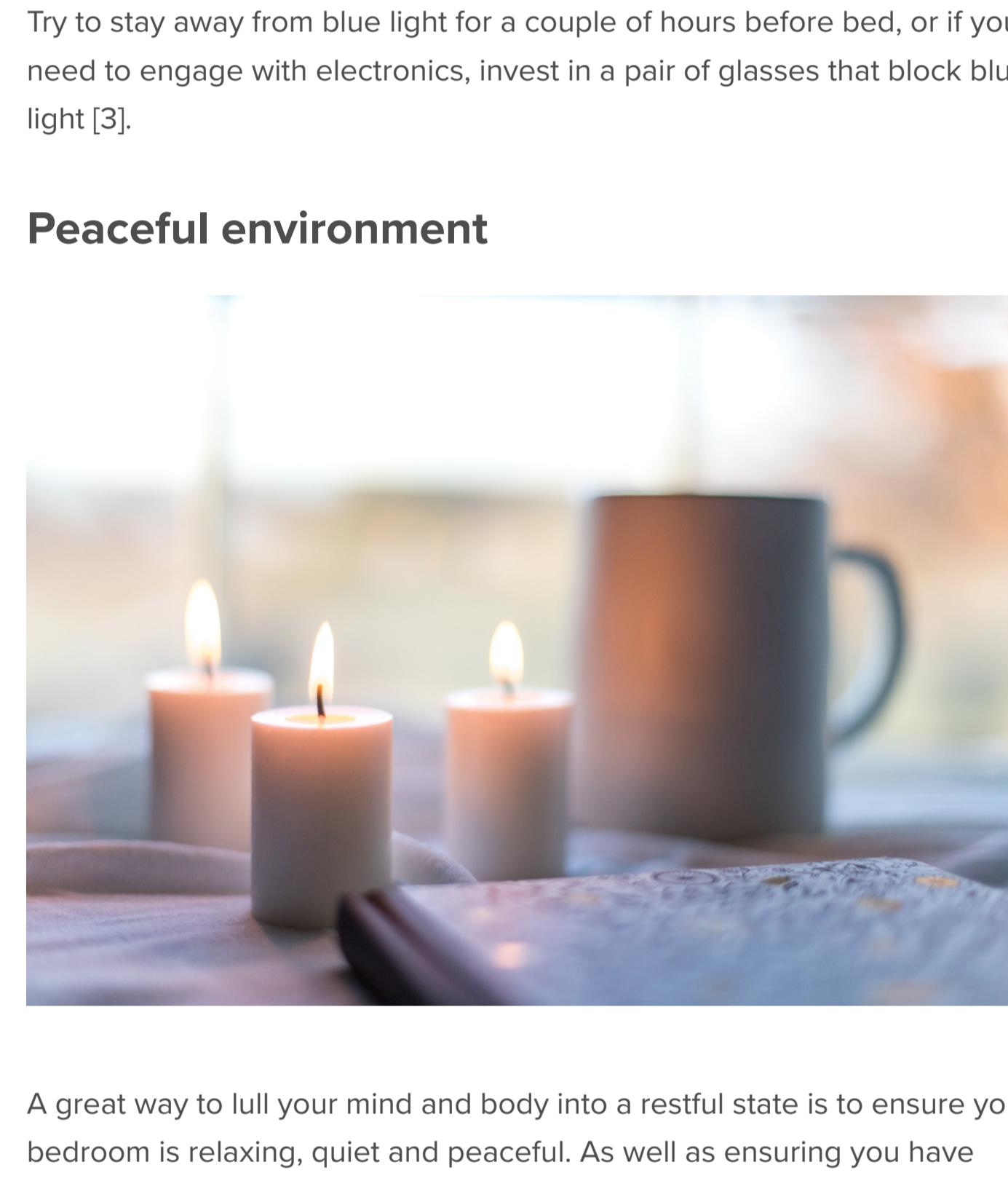
It's not all bad though, the positives of finding a sleep pattern that works for you will vastly improve your day-to-day life, from stress management to increased immune function, and there are some easy ways to implement tried and tested tactics into your resting routine [1].

## Stick to a schedule

Make sure you set aside time for sleep. As simple as it sounds, when push comes to shove, rest is often outranked by other day-to-day requirements, but the impact of this can be detrimental to our health.

Try to wake up and go to bed at a similar time each day to carve out a consistent sleep-wake cycle for your body. Even at weekends, try not to stray from the schedule by more than an hour if you can.

## Sunny outlook



Increasing your exposure to bright light throughout the day helps to keep your circadian rhythm healthy. This is your body's natural time-keeping clock that affects your brain, body and hormones and lets us know when it's time to rest.

A study in older adults found that two hours of bright light exposure during the day increased the amount of sleep by two hours and sleep efficiency by 80%, so even if you don't have a major issue sleeping, getting in those sunlight hours will likely help you get the quality sleep you need [2].

## Banish blue lights

As much as exposure to light is great to energise us in the day and regulate our sleep at night, it has the opposite effect come evening. Our circadian rhythm will tell our brain it is still daylight when exposed to any light, and the bright blue lights of TVs and electronic devices are some of the most powerful sources. This can even reduce the production of melatonin, a hormone that helps us relax.

Try to stay away from blue light for a couple of hours before bed, or if you need to engage with electronics, invest in a pair of glasses that block blue light [3].

## Peaceful environment



A great way to lull your mind and body into a restful state is to ensure your bedroom is relaxing, quiet and peaceful. As well as ensuring you have comfortable bedding, it may be worth investing in dimmable lights to stave off bright light exposure, as well as calming scents like lavender from candles or pillow mists to really set a sleepy tone.

## Keep it cool

We've probably all struggled through stuffy summer nights when the temperature has been hotter than average. When our sleep environment is too warm, we become sweaty and dehydrated and our thermoregulation is interfered with which can cause fatigue. This means we may be mentally and physically tired, but unable to sleep.

Keeping a window open at night or investing in a bedroom fan will help keep you cool and able to achieve good quality rest [3].

## Weigh yourself down

Weighted blankets have risen in popularity over the past couple of years as an aid for anxiety and more recently to help settle us for sleep. The concept behind them is similar to swaddling a newborn, with the pressure simulating a comforting hug. This in theory calms and settles the nervous system, helping us to relax for a restful night's sleep [4].

## CBT for insomnia

Insomnia is a sleep disorder that can make it hard to fall or stay asleep. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can be an effective way to tackle such sleep conditions. It works by helping you to identify thoughts or actions that may be contributing to sleep issues and tackling them from the root. This lets you dive deep into any problems you may have with sleep, allowing you to overcome them once and for all [5].

## Time for tea

A comforting cup of tea can fix many issues, one potentially being a restless night's sleep. Certain varieties of naturally caffeine-free herbal tea such as Valerian root, Lemon Balm or Chamomile work with your body as natural sleep aids, helping you to de-stress and relax before bed. Valerian root and camomile both contain mild sedative properties, while Lemon Balm is great for alleviating anxiety [6].



## Curb caffeine

Caffeine affects people in different ways, but the impact of consuming it may last for up to 24 hours in some people. It promotes alertness in the body and mind by inhibiting our brain chemicals that signal sleep. If you're finding it a struggle to fall asleep or you sleep lightly and wake up constantly in the night, limiting your caffeine intake in the day may be a sensible course of action.

Keep a note of your consumption throughout the day and observe your sleep quality to see if this could be contributing to your restless nights [7].

1. [Sleep: the foundation for healthy habits](#) Mayo Clinic, May 18, 2018.

2. Arne Fetveit, Arvid Skjerve, Bjørn Bjorvatn, [Bright light treatment improves sleep in institutionalised elderly - an open trial](#), Int J Geriatr Psychiatry, 2003 Jun;18(6):520-6. doi: 10.1002/gps.852.

3. [The best temperature for sleep](#) Sleep Foundation, June 24, 2021.

4. [Anxiety and stress weighing heavily at night? A new blanket might help](#) Harvard Health, March 01, 2019.

5. [Insomnia treatment: cognitive behavioural therapy instead of sleeping pills](#) Mayo Clinic, September 28, 2016.

6. [The best tea for sleep](#) Sleep Foundation, May 20, 2021.

7. [Caffeine and sleep](#) Sleep Health Foundation, September 19, 2018.