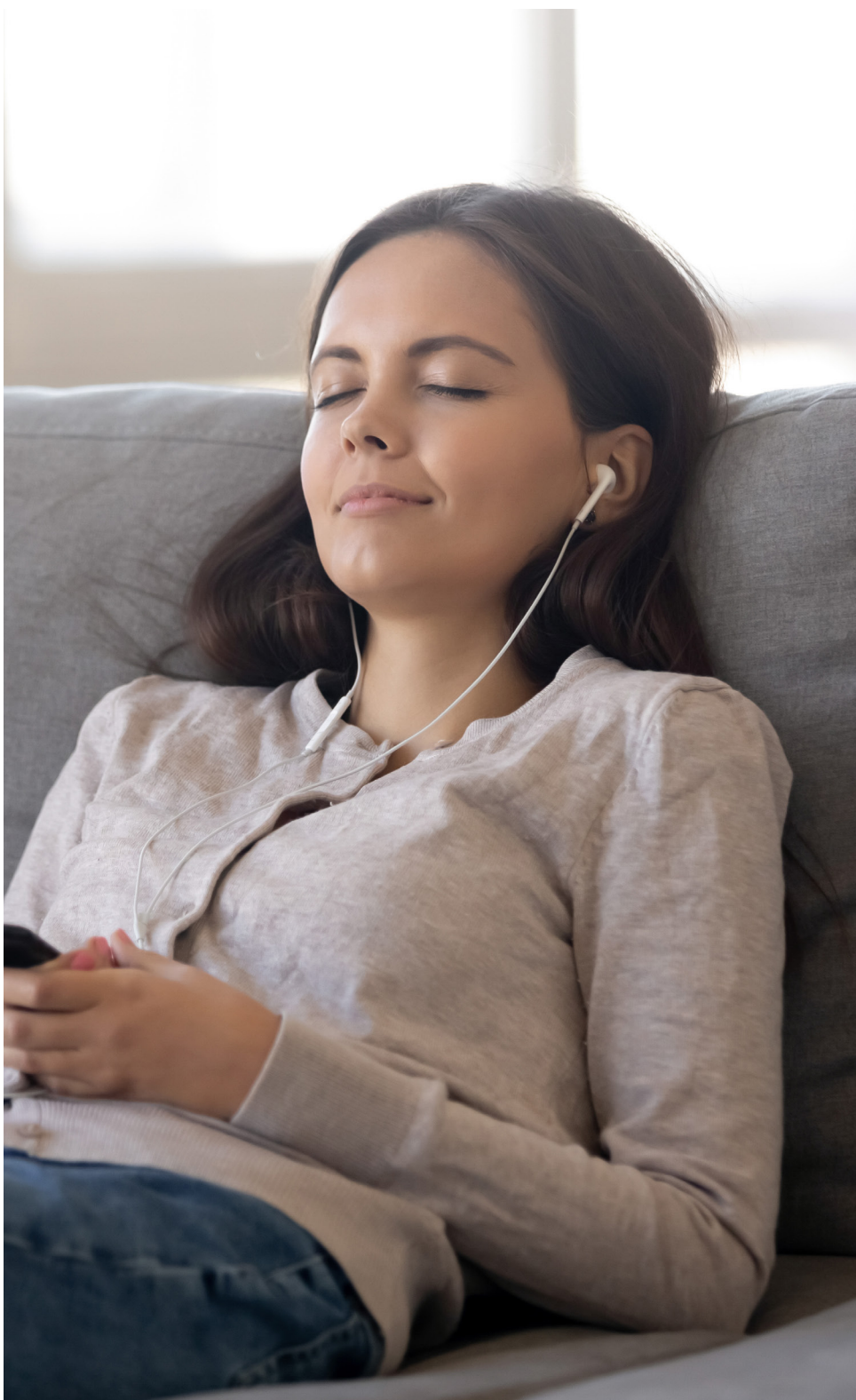




The Sleep of Your Dreams

Like good nutrition and exercise, sleep is a key element for health and wellness, providing renewal for your body and mind. The problem is, with our busy, stressful lives, good sleep isn't always easy. This month, challenge yourself each week to do the smart, simple things to improve your sleep habits.

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Improve Your Routine

SET A SCHEDULE: Studies show that people who keep a consistent bedtime schedule sleep best. This week, keep your patterns similar, even on the weekend. The routine helps your body set a reliable sleep/wake cycle.

STAY COOL: For most people, sleep comes easiest when the room temperature is around 65 degrees. This week: take a warm bath or shower about an hour before bed. When you emerge, the immediate drop in body temperature helps relax your body and sets you up for a better sleep.

DRINK SMART: In the hours before bed, avoid caffeine and alcohol. Alcohol may make you feel drowsy but ultimately it disrupts sleep patterns. Try chamomile tea instead. Studies show it reduces insomnia and improves quality of sleep.

USE TECH WISELY: In the 90 minutes before bed, turn off all screens. They emit light that suppresses melatonin (the hormone that helps you sleep). Instead, try audio. Apps such as Slumber, Noisli and Headspace provide bedtime stories, soothing nature sounds and more.



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Calm Your Mind

WRITE IT DOWN: Anxiety makes insomnia worse, so this week, try some techniques to ease your worries. Before bed, write down your goals for the next day. Leave it all on the sheet of paper. The list will be there in the morning so no need to worry about it all night.

BREATHE DEEPLY: Take some time before bed to do some simple breathing exercises. say that they dissipate stress. Simply inhale through your nose for three seconds, purse your lips and exhale for as long as possible. Repeat for three to five minutes.

RELAX YOUR JAW: One way to turn off your stress hormones (adrenaline and cortisol) is to let your tongue go limp and open your mouth slightly, which loosens the jaw. This sends a message to your nervous system that it's time to rest and restore.

PICTURE THE SERENITY: When you hit the pillow, visualize a simple, pleasing experience. It could be a walk through your favorite park. Imagine the birds singing or a stream flowing. Focus on the breeze on your face. Spend a few minutes escaping and relaxing.



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Eat for Good Sleep

GO FOR B6: Since vitamin B6 helps produce the sleep hormone melatonin, it's a good idea to include lots of B6 foods in your diet. This means adding foods such as salmon, tuna, carrots, spinach, avocado, lentils, beans and brown rice.

EAT EARLIER: Research shows that eating a meal in the evening hours often leads to disruptions in sleep patterns — and the effect is more pronounced in women (although researchers still aren't sure why.) This week, vow to complete all meals several hours before bed.

SNACK SMART: If you eat anything in the evening, try something that's high in tryptophan (which your body uses to make sleep-friendly substances melatonin and serotonin). Good tryptophan-rich choices to add to your list this week: bananas, almonds and yogurt.

CUT THE FAT: This week, rid your diet of super-fatty foods, such as cheeseburgers and French fries. Studies show that those with fatty diets have more difficulty getting to sleep and staying asleep. Bonus tip: lose the spicy foods, too. They may cause heartburn, which can also disrupt sleep.



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Move More

EXERCISE DAILY: Exerting yourself during the day helps you sleep better at night. The key: finding a type of exercise that you like and doing it regularly. Whether it's running, walking, gym time, yoga or something else, choose your personal workout and do it daily through the week.

SIT LESS: Go for a walk while you're on the phone. When you're working at a desk, set an hourly phone alarm to remind you to walk around a bit. When you binge on a TV show, make it a point to get up and take a walk between episodes.

FIND YOUR TIME: For a good night's sleep, the important thing is to add exercise to your day. It doesn't matter if it's in the morning, afternoon or evening. Studies show that different times work just as well for different people, so go with what feels best for you. If you work out in the evening, however, make sure to leave at least an hour to unwind before going to bed.

TRY INTERVAL TRAINING: It's simple and effective. Midway through your next walk, go as fast as you can for one minute. Then walk slowly for a minute. Repeat 3–5 times. As you feel more comfortable, extend the exertion to 90 seconds, and then two minutes. You'll

