

The Wellness Express™

Jump on the train to good health

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Building a Sleep Sanctuary

Presented by: Total Health Systems

Introduction

Getting a restful night's sleep is one of the most important ways to reduce stress and ensure optimal health. Without adequate sleep, you may be more likely to experience weight gain, elevated blood pressure and decreased immune function. According to Harvard Medical School, sleep difficulties are common, affecting about 75 percent of people at least a few nights every week.¹ In this Wellness Express newsletter, we will discuss the top things you can do to build a sleep sanctuary to promote healthy and restorative sleep.



Improve Sleep Hygiene & Pre-Sleep Routine

Sleep hygiene encompasses the many different practices you can perform to experience normal, quality nighttime sleep and optimal daytime alertness. The National Sleep Foundation states that the following practices can improve your sleep hygiene and overall health: Avoiding excessive daytime napping, avoiding stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine and food

consumption too close to bedtime, getting sufficient exercise (especially in the morning) and eating your largest meal around midday.²

Creating a relaxing bedtime routine is another important aspect of sleep hygiene. Reading for only short periods before bed, banishing television sets, computers, smart phones, and other electronic devices from your bedroom, and avoiding emotionally charged conversations before turning in are helpful strategies to promote healthful sleep. Another important pre-sleep ritual you may find helpful and refreshing is foot washing. Washing your feet before bed feels great and helps keep your sheets clean.

Update Your Mattress and Pillows

If your mattress and pillows are getting on in age, consider updating them with newer versions. You spend about one-third of your life in bed, so choosing a healthy and comfortable mattress and pillow are among the most important long-term health investments you can make. Your chiropractor can council you on the most beneficial mattresses and pillows for your specific health situation. For optimal health, and to enhance the quality of your sleep sanctuary, consider mattresses and pillows constructed from natural materials. Certain materials, such as natural latex and wool, do not off-gas (unlike petrochemical products) and are resistant to dust mites.

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Exercise of the Week

Hip Thrust, Straight Legs (easier arm position)

(Consult your chiropractor before engaging in this or any other exercise.)

Start on your back with both feet on the ball, legs straight. Arms rest on the floor, straight out from the shoulders, palms up. Pushing down into the ball with both feet, lift your hips toward the ceiling. Stop when body is straight. Hold for 2 counts. Return to starting position.

Repeat 10-15 times.



Banish Streetlight & Noise

Banishing streetlight and noise is another important strategy in building your sleep sanctuary. Light-proof window coverings can help keep light out, but it is also important to find a way to allow natural light into your bedroom in the early morning - to help maintain a healthy sleep and wake cycle. Removing all sources of indoor light (blinking phones, continuously lit alarm clocks, etc.) is important, too. A 2009 article published in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives* states that light pollution can disrupt your circadian rhythms and have long-term adverse effects on your health.³



Reducing your exposure to street noise when sleeping is also important. According to a 2006 study published in the *Croatian Medical Journal*, urban dwellers living in noisy areas have a greater risk for sleep disturbances than people living in quieter areas.⁴ Also there may be an association between residential road traffic noise exposure and hypertension (high blood pressure) notes a 2007 study published in the journal *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.⁵

Optimize Room Temperature

Find a room temperature that works well for you or you and your partner and select bedding that helps with thermoregulation. Certain sheets, such as bamboo sheets, are absorbent, breathable, and thermoregulating, due to the structure and the expanding and contracting nature of the fibers with varying temperatures.

Consider Room Design

Room design is a crucial part of building a comfortable and serene sleep sanctuary. Consider keeping your bedroom free of clutter, as clothes and nonessential bedroom items may distract you from resting. Use lamps for lighting instead of overhead lights. Warm, dim light, which mimics nighttime, is best. Rugs and wall hangings can help soften your bedroom's acoustics and soothing colors or patterns can help you achieve feng shui balance in your bedroom. Feng shui principles also suggest keeping the area underneath your bed open and clutter-free.



Quote to Inspire

"All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them."

- Walt Disney

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