

The tired woman's guide to blissful sleep

Having trouble getting to sleep; keep waking in the night? Before seeing your GP, try these alternatives

NATURAL
REMEDIES

A good night's sleep can have a huge impact on your general health and happiness. But with our 24/7 lives, it's hard to get the recommended seven hours, even if you go to bed at a decent time. The more you worry, the more you lie awake, starting a slippery slide into insomnia...



'Waking up too early was driving me mad'
Sarah Jackson, 35, is a marketing manager from London.

I've always gone through periods of sleeping badly I started a new job a year ago, which I love, but it's very stressful. I didn't have problems dropping off, but I'd wake up in the early hours and my mind would be racing. Worries started to swim around in my head and I found it impossible to get back to sleep, until it was nearly time to get up. It put a strain on my relationship and made things tense at work, which made me more worried and so the cycle continued. I tried counting slowly and deep breathing, and also kept a notepad by the bed to jot down anything that popped into my head, but I then developed a habit of waking up at a certain time to jot things down. I'd tried various over-the-counter medicines, but they made me drowsy the next day at work. My mum suggested I try an alternative supplement, and I found Sedonium in Boots. I liked it because it said for sleep and stress, so I thought it would kill two birds with one stone! Over a couple of weeks I gradually stopped waking up in the night. It didn't have any side effects, so I now take it on an almost daily basis. I'm also a lot calmer I'm thrilled with the results! Lichtwer Pharma's Sedonium costs £4.99 for 25 tablets, from all chemists.

What is it?



Valerian

A root with a mellow, earthy aroma and taste.

How does it work?

Several constituents, mainly valepotriates and bornyl esters, have a sedative effect, and aren't habit-forming. Drinking a tea made with 1-2 tsp dried valerian root before bedtime will promote sleepiness. Many mainstream studies support the effectiveness of Valerian.

Where to buy?

Dr Stuart's Valerian Plus Botanical Tea (£1.89 for 20 bags) from Holland & Barrett and all major supermarkets, and **MedicHerb's Valerina Night-Time** (£5.99 for 80 tablets) from Boots.



Alpha waves

If you're relaxed, your brain produces alpha waves, which help you think positively. Stress, however, produces beta waves, which can result in insomnia.

An alpha-state can be achieved through meditation, but now you can listen to alpha music, which is arrhythmic and has no words, leading to a slowing of your brain waves back to the ideal alpha waves.

Silence of Music, £14.99 for a 45-minute CD, is available from silenceofmusic.com or call 0845 130 2854.



Passiflora

A herb which is derived from the passion flower plant of rainforests.

Passiflora contains phytochemicals, like rutin, which reduce blood pressure and stress levels. They help to soothe and relax an overactive mind, so you can sleep uninterrupted and wake up refreshed.

Vogel Passiflora Complex tincture (£2.25 for 15ml) is available from health stores. **Femmerherb's Sweet Dreams** (£4.99 for 56 tablets), from supermarkets and chemists.



Serotonin 5HTP

A naturally occurring amino acid extracted from the West African herb *Griffonia simplicifolia*.

5HTP is the precursor of serotonin, the brain chemical that controls mood. Taking it can help maintain a balanced outlook and a relaxed approach to life. Do not take if you're pregnant.

Higher Nature Serotone 5HTP (£12.40 for 30 capsules) is available from health food stores.



Eucalyptus

An Australian essential oil derived from the leaves of the eucalyptus tree that Koala bears like to eat.

It's a panacea for respiratory problems, like colds, sinusitis and flu, which make it difficult to settle at night. Eucalyptus has natural decongestant, anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties. Always inhale, don't ingest.

Put seven to eight drops diluted in water in an oil burner or try the new **Sudafed Vapour Plug** (£4.90, from supermarkets and chemists), which works like a plug-in air freshener except it releases eucalyptus, camphor and menthol vapours.



Too hot, too cold? Try a magic pillow

The new Climarelle® pillow has a special liner made from microcapsules that become fluid with a cooling effect if you're hot and go back to solid, with



a warming effect, if you're too cold. Since you lose most heat through your head, it helps to maintain optimum body temperature to help achieve undisturbed sleep. £20, from [Dreams plc](http://Dreams.plc); for your nearest store, go to dreams.co.uk